# Fortuna Caeca: Symptom of ideological failure in Roman society and Augustine's Christian alternative.

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# *FORTUNA CAECA:*

## Symptom of Ideological Failure in Roman Society,

## *and*

## Augustine's Christian Alternative

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# *SUMMARY*

This thesis argues that the idea of *Fortuna (caeca)* played an important role in the changeover from traditional Roman ideology to Augustinianism. The first part discusses the religious cult of *Fortuna*, and most of all the literary figure of *Fortuna caeca*, in history (Sallust) and philosophy. *Fortuna* acted as a barometer not only for the efficiency of Roman society, but also for the credibility of its ideology. At the forefront of Roman ideology stood *virtus*, and its reward (worldly glory). Once the link between these two was broken, justice fled, and *Fortuna* could reign. The staunchest supporters of traditional ideology belonged to the nobility, the *melior pars* of society. They had lost in the empire their *libertas*, and had little opportunity to exercise their *virtus*. The disparity between political reality and the established ideology proved to be a fertile ground for a whimsical *Fortuna caeca*.

In the second part, a traditional Roman biography of Augustine's life reveals how radical his conversion in the garden of Milan actually was. The Cassiciacum dialogues show his changed view on *Fortuna*, but only *Confessiones* reveals why he took a chance event (the "*tolle, lege*" chant) to be a divine command. A psychological analysis of Augustine's relationships indicates that this incident saved his already fractured self from total annihilation. From his conversion moment on, his identity was firmly anchored in Christ. In *De civiate dei* Augustine applies his own experience to the history of mankind, wherein God executes his salvation plan to bring the predestinated saints to the Heavenly Society. Augustine has difficulties defending his doctrine of freely given grace, predestination and original sin, because nothing seems to distinguish God from a capricious deity such as *Fortuna caeca*, who blindly selects her favourites, and bestows her gifts on them without any regard for merit.

# *DECLARATIONS AND STATEMENTS*

## DECLARATION

**This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.**

**Signed .....**

**Date: .....**

## STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed .....

Date: .....

## STATEMENT 2

I thereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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# *PREFACE*

On the first of November 1755, a devastating earthquake destroyed the city of Lisbon and left more than 32 000 people dead. Not everybody accepted that this disaster should be regarded as a punishment of God. It led Voltaire to openly denounce his belief in God's just providential order, much to the horror of Rousseau.[1] More than thirteen centuries earlier, the sack of Rome (AD 410) led Augustine to write *De civitate Dei*, wherein he tried to persuade staunch pagan intellectuals to abandon their religion, and to join the Catholic faith. He offered a different interpretation of the recent calamity, and his lengthy argument would culminate in the glorious description of the Heavenly Society.

Both disasters could have been ascribed to the workings of *Fortuna (caeca)*, the presiding deity of chance. A. De Botton described her as 'the perfect image to keep our exposure to accident continually in our minds'.[2] Nowadays we seem less affected by the workings of chance, because we can insure ourselves against the unforeseeable, thereby exercising some control over the negative consequences of accidental events. Even a life(!) insurance can be negotiated. The horrible terrorist attack of 9/11 on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York has demonstrated that we, too, are not immune from the destructive power of *Fortuna*. It does not always have to be a large-scale calamity which makes us aware of the power of chance. A trivial coincidence can sometimes move a person to adopt (or 'convert to') a new set of beliefs, making him suddenly aware of the higher truth behind otherwise meaningless events.

This present study aims to investigate the changeover from traditional Roman ideology to "Augustinian" ideology by carefully looking at the Roman multi-faceted concept of *Fortuna*. In the first part of this study, I will look into the growing failure of traditional ideology to provide a satisfactory frame of reference for the transformed political situation in Rome ever since the end of the *respublica*. This will be done in relation to their altered view of the ancient Roman goddess, *Fortuna*. In a second part the Augustinian solution for this ideological malfunctioning will be discussed. Considerable attention will be given to how Augustine came to a Christian interpretation of *Fortuna*, and why he rejected some basic principles of Roman ideology.

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[1] Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University, 2002), pp. 38-40; on the enormous impact of the earthquake on the minds of intellectuals, see p. 1.

[2] Alain De Botton, *The Consolations of Philosophy* (n.p. Hamilton Books, 2000; London: Penguin Books 2001), p. 92.

The objective of this study is conspicuously over-ambitious, since it wishes to draw overall conclusions on wide-ranging, complex issues. Discussing the role of *Fortuna* in Roman society requires an interdisciplinary approach, which involves the theological, historical, literary, philosophical, and psychological field. Needless to say, I do not claim to excel in these disciplines, but I do feel at home in most of them. Also the sheer volume of Augustine's writings, and the intricacy of his ideas make this study look more like a mission impossible. There remains the comforting thought that even failure can yield at times worthwhile results, and this is what this study - more modestly - is aiming at.

Because of the disintegration of traditional Roman ideology, indicated by the growing importance of a whimsical goddess *Fortuna*, a new religion could eventually find footing. Christianity assimilated many elements of Rome's traditional ideology, but rejected some of its most basic principles. There is no better illustration of the influence of Roman culture on Christianity than that the great Christian Church fathers, such as Lactantius, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine were all steeped in pagan literature. Without doubt, this must have considerably affected their understanding of what initially was, after all, a religion with origins in Judaism.

# *ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

First of all, I would like to thank Professor Ceri Davies for his patience, support, advice and proofreading, and for raising my interest for Augustine during his immaculate and refined lectures; professor Stephen Mitchell for his guidance, and his introduction to the historical and political aspect of the Late Antique World, and professor John Morgan, for his entertaining lectures on the ancient novel and, particularly, on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses.*

I have felt privileged to have been taught in the past by professor Samuel IJsseling, a (now retired) philosophy teacher at the University of Leuven, who demonstrated that the Antique World can teach us a lot about man's place in the world.

The excellent provision of a student-friendly platform to air new ideas in the postgraduate department of Classics and Ancient History has been particularly useful for me. The constructive comments made during these sessions, and the encouragements were of considerable help. I am further grateful to the University of Wales, Swansea for awarding me a *Postgraduate Research Studentship* without which it would have been impossible for me to finance my research, while supporting a family.

Augustine was very much a man of books, and in this area, I have been blessed. The always friendly library staff of Swansea University, in particular Dr. Ian Glenn, and Andrew Brown, I would like to thank for their helpful advice, and for being sympathetic towards the needs of an overseas student. I would like to thank the friars of the Augustinian monastery of Leuven-Heverlee, especially Bernard Bruning, for their hospitality during the fruitful and agreeable time I spent in their monastery, which houses the *Augustijns Historisch Instituut*, a library with a vast amount of material on Augustine. I can recommend every scholar interested in Augustine to visit the institute, with its inspiring setting - a veritable haven of peace! -, and its easy access to a wealth of information.

Throughout this research my wife has been an unwavering support to me, while she also proofread parts of the text. Our two children, Remi and Siemke, born during my research period, have enriched my view on life in a way no book could ever have accomplished. At times, they were only too keen to demonstrate Augustine's doctrine of original sin, but you cannot help but love them. I would like to end by expressing my gratitude towards my parents, reserving for them the Augustinian phrase, 'quorum meritis credo esse omne quod vivo' (*'to whose merits, I believe, is due all that I am'*). I wish I could blame *Fortuna* for the remaining mistakes and blunders in this work, but I should know better by now. I take full responsibility for whatever error that may have crept in through sheer obstinacy, or whatever blunder that may have been overlooked through inexcusable inattentiveness.

Enim nullam providentiam praeesse rebus humanis libenter opiniantur ... Fortunae patrocinio propulsare se putant, quam tamen caecam effingere ac pingere consuerunt.

*Some are glad to believe that there is no divine providence presiding over human affairs ... They imagine that they are driven on by the favour of Fortuna. Nevertheless, they are wont to sculpture and paint her as blind.*

AUGUSTINE, *De libero arbitrio* III. ii (5)

# INTRODUCTION

> *Nothing so clearly exposes the break-down of classical scientia as the deification of chance itself. To make the course of history turn on such a principle is fatal to intellectual integrity and moral responsibility alike. In the light of these considerations Augustine's repudiation of fortune emerges, not as an arbitrary theological preference but as a matter of sheer intellectual and moral necessity.*
>
> C.N. Cochrane[1]

With these words, the historian C.N. Cochrane acknowledged in the last chapter of his book *Christianity and Classical Culture* the importance of the concept of *Fortuna*[2] for the transformation of the classical world of Augustus into the Christian world of Augustine. *Fortuna* had become the embodiment of a growing disorder within Roman society, and an indication of the shortcomings of its *scientia.*

Some fine studies have already been carried out on different aspects of the multifaceted concept of *Fortuna* in the Roman world. There are general encyclopaedic overviews, studies about her use in particular literary works, about her cults, and her role in history and philosophy. So far, there has not been a study of *Fortuna* specifically related to traditional Roman ideology as it was perceived by the senatorial elite.

One can easily understand the rise of a blind and capricious *Fortuna* during the turbulent times at the end of the *respublica* which resulted in the changeover to the *principate.* Also the chaos of the third century AD accorded well with envisaging *Fortuna caeca* at work.[3]

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[1] C.N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, rev. edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944; repr. Galaxy Book, 1961), p. 479. Earlier on in his book, he stressed the vital role of *Fortuna* in his study: 'Throughout this work there have been numerous indications of the role played by the concept of fortune in pagan thought. Its importance cannot better be suggested than by the fact that the very word for happiness or felicity is *εὐδαιμονία* or *εὐτυχία* (*τύχη εκ του θείου*); in which sense it is first accorded recognition by the poets. From poetry it passes into science, there to become a stumbling-block to historians and philosophers alike' (p. 478).

[2] Throughout this investigation I will not use the word "*fortune*" but preserve the term "*Fortuna*" (with a capital "F"), whenever I think it was possible for a Roman to perceive behind this word a personified power. The reason for this is that the English word "*fortune*" does not call to mind the personified deity over chance events. "*Lady luck*" sounds too peculiar, and it does not cover all the overtones of the term *Fortuna.* Since a Roman did not use capitals, and most works were read out loud anyway, he had to make up his mind every time he read or heard the word *Fortuna* what exactly was meant with this term, ranging from the goddess itself to merely a rhetorical device to denote a chance event. A similar remark has been made by D. Feeney about personifications of abstracts in general (D. Feeney, *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs*, Roman Literature and its Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 86). This differentiation may sound pedantic, but it will be crucial when the use of *Fortuna* is discussed in the *Cassiciacum Dialogues* of Augustine.

[3] I therefore do not subscribe to the idea that belief in *Fortuna caeca* is above all engendered by disasters: every age has to cope with calamities. The acceptance of such a capricious power behind worldly events also depends to some extent on the confidence one has in the existing belief system. As long as this is firm enough, even disasters can be absorbed by the prevailing ideology. An example par excellence is the series of disasters that befell Rome during the second Punic War. The Senate at Rome attempted many times to reassure its people to keep having faith in the Roman cause, by performing even unusual religious rituals to

What needs explaining is her continual prevalence during the lengthy periods of peace in the Roman empire. Stability and prosperity seem a bizarre habitat for a blind *Fortuna* to thrive in.

The key to this problem possibly lies in Augustus' decision to preserve traditional Roman ideology, with its vigorous propagation of Roman *virtus*, while the political reality had drastically changed, especially for the senatorial elite. In his challenging book, *The Origins of Virtue*, the biologist M. Ridley focuses on the innate social nature of human beings.[4] Men show a readiness to sacrifice part of their immediate profit for the benefit of a long-term reward, and are overall willing to invest their personal efforts for the common good. M. Ridley detects similar patterns of behaviour in "primitive" societies and in the animal world, so that his findings are also valid for ancient Roman society.[5] The link between *virtus* and reward remains crucial to encourage selfless behaviour. The efficiency of Roman ideology to encourage the exercise of *virtus* in public life may well have laid the foundation of the remarkable Roman achievement during republican times. The concept of *Fortuna caeca* can be regarded as a sign of the breakdown of the vital link between *virtus* and reward in society, especially according to the republican-minded senatorial elite: they could no longer expect to receive a traditional reward for exercising their *virtus*, especially when their public role was significantly reduced in a thinly disguised monarchy.

**Part I** of this study will deal with *Fortuna* in Roman ideology, but it is written with Augustine in mind, so that seemingly uncalled for digressions on particular aspects will only become relevant in the second part. The first part remains a separate study, intended to explore the attempts of the senatorial intellectual elite to remain loyal to the traditional ideology, despite *Fortuna*'s destructive role. The relation between *Fortuna* and *virtus* within Roman society will be an important element in this overview for above mentioned reason: *virtus* represented the approved way for a Roman citizen to serve his community rightly, whereas *Fortuna caeca*'s capricious behaviour in society discouraged citizens from exercising *virtus*, because of distrust in receiving a just reward for their efforts.

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appease the gods in this way (for instance, Livy, *Ab urbe condita* XXII 57; also W.W. Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People* (London: Clarendon Press, 1923), pp. 316-329). When, however, an existing order already shows signs of weakness, disastrous events will accelerate its downfall and encourage the belief in a disorderly force such as *Fortuna caeca*. For instance, the horrible civil wars at the end of the Republic could no longer be comprised within the traditional order, since this order was threatened from within by prominent figures such as Marius, Sulla, Catillina, Julius Caesar, Anthony, and the young Octavian. Religion, too, had lost by then most of its controlling impact. What seems to be left was a raging, irrational force, destroying the once so cherished traditional order of the Republic (On this theme, see the section on Sallust). Only a new order seems to be capable to restore confidence and to push back the dominant influence of *Fortuna*.

[4] M. Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue* (n.p.: Viking, 1996; repr. London: Penguin Books, 1997).

[5] On three occasions he uses examples of Roman history to explain the dynamics within groups and factions in society.

At first, *Fortuna* had a confined place within Roman religion. Aspects of her religious cults will be discussed in a first chapter with special attention to her much debated origin. Only later did the goddess come to lead a literary life, and scholars usually distinguish her from the goddess *Fortuna* in cults by calling her *Fortuna-Tyche*. Perhaps *Fortuna caeca* would be an even more adequate description of this literary concept. Her role in history, and philosophy (Stoicism, Epicureanism and (Neo-)Platonism), will be discussed. The *auctores selecti* for these sections may seem rather arbitrarily chosen, as if they have been handpicked by *Fortuna caeca* herself. Several considerations have led the present author to focus in particular on Sallust, and to a lesser degree on Ammianus Marcellinus to discuss *Fortuna*'s role in historiography. Sallust can offer us a clue why *Fortuna* became such a dominating power in Roman society. Seneca is chosen to represent Roman Stoicism. His life will be considered in more detail against the backdrop of the established *principate*. The new form of government had deprived the aristocracy of considerable political control and liberty. The way they tried to adapt to this situation will be of particular interest. The poet Lucan offers a valuable alternative view of *Fortuna*.[6] *Fatum* in Late Antiquity was easily taken to mean astral fate, so that some attention will be devoted to this worldview, not in the least because Augustine was very much infatuated by astrology.

The section on philosophy includes also a discussion of *Epicureanism*. This philosophy, vigorously attacked by pagan and Christian intellectuals alike, offers a natural habitat for a belief in *Fortuna*. By basing the universe on chance encounters, and denying a deterministic order, only a small, but crucial, step is needed to arrive at a world exposed to the fickle power of *Fortuna*, the goddess presiding over chance. The Epicureans themselves nevertheless strongly opposed the idea of turning chance into a divinity.

Special attention will further be given to *Fortuna* as a *Weltanschauung*. She offered next to *fatum*, which in Augustine's time often meant astral fate, an explanation of worldly events, and both views were usually taken into account in Antiquity.

A secondary aim of this study is to compare some modern scientific findings concerning chance, coincidence and rational order with views expressed in Antiquity. In particular, the so-called "chaos theory", which allows for complete randomness within a deterministic system, "quantum theory" which assumes an uncaused event, and Jung's concept of synchronicity, which deals with meaningful coincidences, will be considered. It

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[6] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz's chapter on Lucan's epic *Pharsalia* "The system rejected: Lucan's *Pharsalia*" made me more fully aware of him being a valuable alternative voice for Seneca's view on the *principate*, which translates itself into a different view on *Fortuna* (J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979; n.p.: repr. Sandpiper Books, 1996) pp. 148-9). This is confirmed by the book of V. Rudich, *Dissidence and Literature under Nero* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

makes the topic of chance in Antiquity – and chance is what *Fortuna caeca* personified - more related to our times. A more exciting by-product of this study will be that some of these modern ideas on chance and order show remarkable resemblance with what was said in Antiquity.

Finally, (Neo-)Platonism will be discussed as a final attempt of the intellectual elite to make sense of the world within the constraints of Roman ideology. This will be considered in a broader context, seeing that Augustine became considerably influenced by this philosophy in Milan. My reason for including also Apuleius' novel, *Metamorphoses*, in this general overview, is that the conversion story invites comparison with Augustine's *Confessiones*. It will be interesting to see what Augustine does with the prominent role of *Fortuna* in Apuleius' story.

Cicero and Virgil are two of the most conspicuous absentees in this list of *auctores selecti*. It seems unforgivable that these two most important pillars of Roman ideology do not receive a separate chapter in this study. Virgil's poem is, however, notoriously ambiguous about its political sympathies, so that the established governmental bodies, imperial court and Roman senate, could find something which supported their cause. Since this study particularly focuses on the senatorial elite, his poem is less useful. Virgil was certainly no forward propagandist of *princeps* Augustus. His harking back to the past must have helped to keep republican sentiments alive, so that both the senatorial aristocracy as the imperial court could subscribe to Virgil's poem.

Cicero, of course, was almost the embodiment of the republican ideal. The problem here is that his voluminous writings will not that easily yield a representative picture of *Fortuna*, so that in this case, the extensive effort may only lead to a disappointing result.[7] However, regular use will be made of mainly his philosophical works throughout the study, because on certain issues he is an indispensably valuable source.

This first part will provide a helpful background for discussing some of Augustine's main works in view of his thoughts on *Fortuna*. He was, after all, a representative intellectual figure of late fourth century, having followed a uniform education in which he absorbed the fundaments of Roman civilisation through the works of Virgil, Cicero, Terence, and Sallust. Macrobius' *Saturnalia* is an example par excellence wherein the author falls back on the literature of the Late Republic and Early Empire in order to understand contemporary life.[8]

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[7] Interestingly, there has not been an extensive study on the use of *Fortuna* in Cicero's works.

[8] See J. M. Morris, 'Macrobius: A Classical Contrast to Christian Exegesis', *Augustinian Studies* 28.2 (1997), 81-100. This article investigates the similarity between Macrobius and Augustine in interpreting venerated texts allegorically. In the case of Macrobius, these texts are works of Cicero (above all *Somnium Scipionis*), Virgil, and Homer. J. Morris states: 'The antiquarianism of the late classical world did not allow for a sense of gap

This is a typical conservative reflex of the elite, - the deep-seated Roman characteristic of holding on to the *mos maiorum* is another illustration. Although the political world had undergone fundamental changes over the centuries, the curriculum of Roman education would still hark back to the works of the late republican Sallust, and the towering authority of Cicero and Virgil, imbuing every generation with traditional, republican ideology. Admittedly, the emphasis within education was on the art of speaking, and these traditional authors were considered the champions of style: Cicero for his *copiositas*, Sallust for his *brevitas*, and Virgil for both of them in his poetry.[9] Nevertheless, as Augustine himself experienced, the content often seeps unconsciously into the mind, even if one is only paying attention to the style.[10] That is also why Augustine recognized so sharply the dangers a Christian faced when studying the traditional Roman literature. He thought it necessary to tackle this problem in his influential work *De doctrina Christiana*,[11] wherein he outlined the proper attitude towards the classical heritage.

In the **second** part of this study Augustine alone will be in the picture. Christianity presented the Romans with a new ideology, which integrated the (apparent) irregularities within a differently conceived divine and just order. The broken link between *virtus* and reward appeared to be restored, so that each received what was their due. A new universal ideology could thus restore meaning and purpose in the life of Roman citizens, even though the glory of Rome was no longer unequivocally at its heart. Exploring Augustine's works through focusing on his ideas about *Fortuna*, can offer new insights not only into his theological and philosophical thinking, but also in his conversion process, wherein two "chance" occurrences played a pivotal role. The question 'How convincingly did Augustine

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between the world of Cicero and Virgil and that of their own times. The Roman Empire was eternal and unchanging, and these important texts of the Empire must be relevant to Macrobius' time. Otherwise, the decline of the Empire might have to be admitted' (p. 96).

[9] MACROBIUS, *Saturnalia* V.1: 'Quattuor sunt, inquit Eusebius, genera dicendi: copiosum, in quo Cicero dominatur; breve, in quo Salustius regnat; siccum, quod Frontoni ascribitur; pingue et floridum in quo Plinius Secundus quondam et nunc nullo veterum minor noster Symmachus luxuriatur. sed apud unum Maronem haec quattuor genera repperies'.

'*Eusebius says: There are four styles of expression: the abundant style, in which Cicero dominates, the concise style, in which Sallust rules: the dry style, which is attributed to Fronto, the rich and flowery style in which at one time Pliny the Younger, and now our own Symmachus, no less than the old writers, amused himself. But in the works of one man, Virgil, you will discover all these four styles.*'

[10] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* III. iv (7), on Cicero's *Hortensius*: "Non ergo ad acuendam linguam referebam illum librum, neque mihi locutio sed quod loquebatur persuaserat ('*So I was not drawing on that book for the sharpening of my tongue, neither did the style instigate me, but what was said*'. So also *Confessiones* V. xiv (24) on Ambrose's sermons: '... veniebant in animum meum simul cum verbis quae diligebam res etiam quas neglegebam, neque enim ea dirimere poteram' ('*...together with the words, which I was enjoying, the subject matter, which I was ignoring, flowed into my mind, for I could not separate them*).

[11] A very good discussion on Augustine's ideas concerning the inevitable tension within a cultured Roman Christian between Christian belief and Roman education, can be found in Carol Harrison's excellent book: *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), *chpt.* 2: "Res non verba: Christianity and pagan literary culture" (pp. 46-78).

succeed in banishing the concept of *Fortuna* from his propagated Christian order?' will be investigated when analysing Augustine's alternative for a world governed by chance.

In 1939, Cochrane already assigned a prominent role to *Fortuna* as symbol of the demise of classical *scientia* and the changeover to a Christian *Weltanschauung*. It is perplexing why, some sixty years later, a study on *Fortuna* in the works of Augustine, the greatest Christian Father, still desirable. Has not enough been written on this topic and does this enquiry not run into the danger of purely compiling and remoulding established facts? Surprisingly, an in-depth study of this subject is still wanting.[12]

One of the reasons is that a century later, a Roman aristocrat wrote from prison, while awaiting a cruel death penalty, an enormously influential work with the power of *Fortuna* as main theme: Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae* (*c.* AD 480-524).[13] It guides the reader through a gradual philosophical progress to a higher truth, where even *Fortuna*'s whimsicalities eventually could find a place within a just, and grander order. Since the issue of her power is treated thoroughly, this book provides ideal material for a comprehensive study of *Fortuna* in Late Antiquity.[14] Boethius' thorough treatment has inevitably put Augustine's ideas on *Fortuna* somewhat in the shadow, all the more because Augustine only deals with her in a few scattered sections, a negligible quantity in proportion to his whole oeuvre.[15] Cut and paste work on these relevant passages, does not provide us automatically with a neat synopsis of his view on *Fortuna*. This can give the impression that *Fortuna* was in the end not that important to Augustine. However, even though he did not devote an entire work to the topic of *Fortuna*,[16] it is nevertheless possible to deduce from his oeuvre his remarkable attitude towards her. Even if the active worship of *Fortuna* was not very much alive in Augustine's days, Boethius' later extant discussion of her power shows that, even a century later, she was still worthy of so much effort to integrate her within a new belief

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[12] Only more general works on *Fortuna* devote some space to Augustine, for instance: V. Cioffari, *Fortuna and Fate from Democritus to St. Thomas Aquinas*, New York, 1935, pp. 78-82; G. Kirchner, *Fortuna in Dichtung und Emblematik des Barock: Tradition und Bedeutungswandel eines Motivs*, Stuttgärt, 1970, pp. 105-7 & 114-5; E. Meyer-Landrut, *Fortuna. Die Göttin des Glücks im Wandel der Zeiten* (München: Deytscher Kunstverlag, 1997), p.28; I. Kajanto, "Fortuna" in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.17.1 (1981), pp.555-6; Particularly helpful is I. Kajanto's article 'Fortuna' in *RAC* vol.8 cols. 182-197; H.R. Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Philosophy and Literature* (Smith College Studies in Modern Languages III.4), 1922, Massachusetts, pp. 181-2. So far I have found one article on *Fortuna* that deals with one particular passage of Augustine: J. Doignon, "La fortuna y el hombre afortunado. Dos temas parenéticos del prólogo del libro I *Contra academicos*", in *Augustinus* 31 (1986), pp. 79-85.

[13] E. Meyer-Landrut Munich, 1997, p.34: "*Kein Werk der Übergangsperiode von der Spätantike bis zum Frühmittelaltar hat ein so weitreichenden Einfluß ausgeübt wie 'De consolatione Philosophiae'*".

[14] See for instance J.C. Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune in the Early Middle Ages: The Boethian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1988). In his article "Fortuna, Fate, and Chance" (*Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, II, New York, 1973, pp. 225-236), V. Cioffari writes: '*The whole question of the fortuitous is treated comprehensively by Boethius*' (p. 231).

[15] This is reflected in general works on the idea of *Fortuna*, which usually devote more pages to Boethius than to Augustine; for instance E. Meyer-Landrut (1997). He assigns half a page to Augustine (p. 28), and almost five pages (pp. 30-34) to Boethius.

[16] Augustine also never devoted a work on *amicitia*, while most will agree it was very important to him.

system. Even the cultivated audience of the sixth century AD needed to be educated how the actions of *Fortuna* should be understood.

It is one thing to study a complex concept such as *Fortuna*, it is another thing to combine this task with the study of her in the voluminous writings of Augustine. This time, the selection of the most appropriate works is less problematic. The main focus will be on three pieces: Augustine's Cassiciacum dialogues (AD 386-387), the *Confessiones* (AD *c.* 397), and *De civitate Dei* (AD 413-426).

The last choice needs little justification. Augustine discusses *Fortuna* on several occasions in this influential work, as part of his general attack on Roman religion and ideology, so that it comprises excellent material to evaluate the two conflicting ideologies.

The Cassiciacum dialogues, written when Augustine was merely a catechumen in the Catholic Church, are important since only in these treatises does he use the term *Fortuna* in a positive sense, a fact he later will come to regret in his *Retractationes.*[17] Together with *De civitate Dei*, these early dialogues contain the greatest number of references to *Fortuna.*[18]

It may surprise the reader, that a substantial chapter will be devoted to *Confessiones.* Not once does Augustine mention *Fortuna* in this literary masterpiece, which seems reason enough to exclude it from this study. There is nevertheless sufficient basis for performing an extensive analysis of the work. Firstly, compared with Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* - another conversion story, but one wherein *Fortuna caeca* plays a crucial role - *Confessiones* can be regarded as a paradigm of how a Christian should understand his own personal life story, without falling back on the classic literary device of *Fortuna.* This combines well with *De civitate Dei*, since this work does the same, not for one's personal history, but for the history of the world.[19] Secondly, Augustine's conversion moment involves a personal interpretation of events, which outsiders could have regarded as pure chance, so that at the very heart of the conversion story, *Fortuna caeca* is not far away. Thirdly, Augustine's profound self-analysis within the *Confessiones* provides us with a unique opportunity to try and understand why and how Augustine became a Christian. It can also explain why he felt so strongly about the working of saving grace and the dire consequences of original sin, despite the heavy criticism they provoked. This last point may seem at first glance not to pertain to my subject matter, but Augustine's re-interpretation of *Fortuna* stood at the basis of his

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[17] AUGUSTINE, *Retractationes* I i.1-3.

[18] See *Appendix B* for the distribution of *Fortuna* quotes in Augustine's works.

[19] J.J. O'Meara underpins in his excellent introduction to the *Penguin* translation of *De civitate Dei* (*St. Augustine. City of God*, trans. by H. Bettenson, introduction by J,J. O'Meara, (London: Penguin books, 1984) my overall selection within Augustine's works. He picks out those passages from the *Cassiciacum Dialogues* which are also relevant to my topic, and states that together with the *Confessiones* they have vital aspects in common with *De civitate Dei*: their shared themes are all inspired by the circumstances of Augustine's own life (p. xvi-xvii).

challenging doctrine of grace. One of the more intriguing aspects of this study will be that in his view of divine grace, and in his explanation of the origin of evil, the concept of *Fortuna caeca* seems to re-emerge.

This study has an organic rather than a linear structure, which makes it perhaps less easy to read. There are numerous links between different sections throughout the work, while the two parts form a close unity: whereas in the first part the background for Augustine's life is silently being prepared, in the second half, Augustine's gradual extrication from traditional ideology is being discussed.

A massive amount is written on Augustine and on the three selected works, the early dialogues, *Confessiones* and *De civitate Dei*, which may turn this work into intellectual suicide. Since the study of *Fortuna* in Augustine is lagging behind, each work provides enough material for a separate study. Focusing on all three works means that one can follow the evolution in his thought on *Fortuna*. The Cassiciacum dialogues offer us a glimpse of a young Augustine who only recently had said farewell to Roman ideology, while *Confessiones* helps us to know better the man and the role *Fortuna* played in his life. *De civitate Dei* provides us with his mature thought, and a presentation of an impressive, coherent belief system, constructed to persuade the pagan elite to join the Catholic faith.

Readers may question the considerable attention given to the psychological motivation of Augustine to embrace Christianity. His immense contributions to Western culture lie as much in the field of psychology as in theology, because he closely linked his search of God with the search of his inner self. *Confessiones* presents us with a unique document which analyses his inner motivations behind the decisions he took in life. At the same time it offers us the rare opportunity to look for traces of his personal life experiences, which could explain certain aspects of his highly controversial universal Christian doctrine.

# PART I

## *FORTUNA* IN TRADITIONAL ROMAN IDEOLOGY

# CHAPTER I

# *FORTUNA* IN ROMAN RELIGION

The *Fortuna* of Roman literature is above all the goddess of chance. She distributes and takes back her gifts according to her personal whim. She accounts for the irrational, unjust events that defy the regular order, and she often denotes the unexpected.

A different picture emerges when we look at her cult. The origin of the goddess *Fortuna* is much debated.[1] G. Wissowa (1912) and K. Latte (1960)[2] argued that she was originally a Sabine divinity of women and fertility. More recently, I. Kajanto (1981)[3] opposed this view, claiming that *Fortuna* was of Etruscan origin, closely connected to the notion of Fate. Jacqueline Champeaux (1982), while acknowledging in her two-volume work on the cult of *Fortuna* the difficulties in establishing her origin, conjectures that *Fortuna* was originally an agrarian goddess of fecundity in the surrounding countryside of the proto-Romans, before the Etruscan domination of Rome.[4] L. De Jaegere (1940)[5] similarly argued that *Fortuna* was an oracle goddess of Roman-Latin origin. During the Etruscan occupation of Rome *Fortuna* was strongly influenced by the almost identical Etruscan goddess *Nortia.* Later she was identified with the Greek Τύχη.

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[1] J. Carter begins his article 'The Cognomina of the Goddess *Fortuna*' (*TAPA* 31 (1900), 60-68) with the words: 'No more drastic illustration of the paucity of our knowledge of early Roman religion can well be found than the fact that the origin of the great goddess "*Fortuna*" is a riddle, unresolved as yet' (p. 60). A century later, there is still no agreement on the issue: I. Kajanto, 'Epigraphical Evidence of the Cult of *Fortuna* in Germania Romana', *Latomus* 47 (1988), 554-583: 'The real origin of her cult is controversial and much debated' (p. 554); E. Meyer-Landrut, *Fortuna: Die Göttin des Glücks im Wandel der Zeiten*, (Münich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1997), p. 9: 'Über die frühesten Formen des *Fortuna* Kultus herrscht Unklarheit'.

[2] G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft IV.5 (Munich: Beck, 1912), pp. 256-268; K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft v.4 (Munich: Beck, 1960), pp. 176-183.

[3] I. Kajanto, s.v. 'Fortuna' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (*ANRW*) II.17.1 (1981), pp. 502-558.

[4] Jacqueline Champeaux, *Fortuna: Le culte de la Fortune à Rome et dans le monde romain des origines à la mort de César*, I: Fortuna dans la religion archaïque (Paris & Rome: École française de Rome, 1982), pp. 454 and 470.

[5] L. De Jaegere, *Fortuna: De oude Cultus van Fortuna in Latium en te Rome*, dissertation (University of Leuven, 1940).

# 1. THE OLDEST CULTS OF *FORTUNA*

When discussing the origin of the worship of the goddess *Fortuna*[6] it is necessary to look for the oldest cults devoted to her. She did not belong to the *di indigetes*, but to the *di novensides*, which meant that she was taken over by Rome from neighbouring people. K. Latte and G. Wissowa[7] assume that the earliest cults of *Fortuna* came from Praeneste (*Fortuna Primigenia*) and Antium[8] (*sorores Fortunae*). In both places they were associated with a famous oracle.

## 1.1. The Famous Oracle of *Fortuna Primigenia* at Praeneste

It is worth paying considerable attention to the oracle of the *Fortuna* at Praeneste.[9] We are quite well informed about how the oracle functioned in a passage of Cicero's *De divinatione*.[10] He describes it as *clarissuma sors*,[11] the most famous and prestigious oracle on the Italian peninsula. One could rightly call it the "Delphi of Italy".[12] Cicero writes about the oracle that under the goddess' direction (*Fortunae monitu*) a boy[13] shuffled the lots (*miscere sortes*), on which a text was written in ancient script (*insculptae priscarum litterarum notis*),[14] and his innocent hand picked one out (usually described with the technical terms *ducere* or *tollere*). That it can

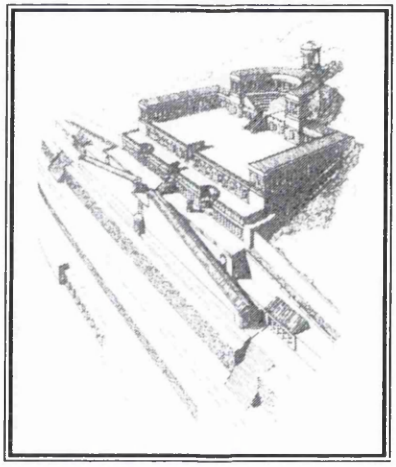

*Figure 1*: Reconstruction of the terraced temple of *Fortuna Primigenia* at Praeneste

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[6] I. Kajanto (1981, pp. 502-558) uses the same title of a section in his comprehensive article "Fortuna". This article is a very good starting point, together with W. Otto, s.v. 'Fortuna', in *RE* VII.1 (1910), 12-42.

[7] K. Latte 1960, p. 176; G. Wissowa 1912, pp. 256-268.

[8] Horace's ode I. 35 is about the *Fortuna* at Antium. Macrobius describes in his *Saturnalia* (I. 23, 13) how the oracle was consulted. See also Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, pp. 149-182.

[9] The importance of the oracle will come back when discussing the conversion scene in the chapter on Augustine's *Confessiones*.

[10] CICERO, *De divinatione* II. 85-87 & I. 34; Tibullus in poem I. 3, 9-14 gives an account of a private oracle, while Apuleius in his novel *Metamorphoses* IX. 8 recounts the profitability and the deception involved in running a private oracle, based on divination via sortilege (These examples come from Jacqueline Champeaux in her article 'Les oracles de l'Italie antique: hellénisme et italicité', *Kernos* 3 (1990), 103-111 (p. 106).

[11] CICERO, *De div.* II. 85.

[12] L. De Jaegere 1940, p. 25; Jacqueline Champeaux 1990, p. 103.

[13] CICERO, *De div.* II. 86. K. Latte (1960, p. 177, n. 6) notices the parallel with Egyptian magical papyri, where an innocent child frequently plays part in the ritual; Jacqueline Champeaux (1982, I, pp. 65-66), too, thinks the child serves as an 'innocent instrument' to draw the lot.

[14] CICERO, *De div.* II.85.

also be a girl who performed the drawing of the lots is demonstrated on a *denarius* of M. Plaetorius Cestianus, (*c.* 69-66 BC), himself from Praeneste (*fig. 2*). On the reverse a girl is seen, holding in both her hands a wooden tablet inscribed with the word 'SORS'.[15]

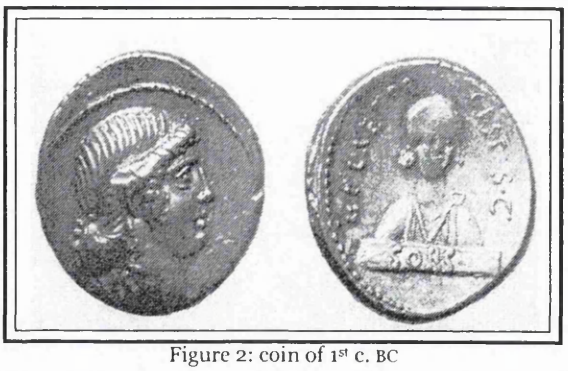

Figure 2: coin of 1st c. BC
- *Fortuna* at Praeneste - a child (girl) picks out a lot at random

## 1.2. The Oldest Cults: *Fors Fortuna* and *Fortuna Virgo* at Rome

I. Kajanto argues that there is no convincing reason why the earliest cults of *Fortuna* at Rome should not predate the oracular cults at Praeneste and Antium.[16] A temple (*fanum*) of *Fors Fortuna* stood on the right bank of the Tiber, outside the city of Rome, which was not introduced by Numa Pompilius,[17] but allegedly by Servius Tullius, the legendary sixth king of Rome (578-534 BC), who had risen from slave to king. The temple was situated more precisely in Trastevere at the first milestone of the *Via Portuensis*.[18] Livy tells us that in 293 BC Sp. Carvilius built another temple (*aedes*) of *Fors Fortuna* on the same road at the sixth milestone.[19] The name *Fors Fortuna* was formed through iteration, so that the original meaning of *Fortuna* was closely connected with the original meaning of *fors*.

Servius Tullius founded also a second *Fortuna* cult at Rome, the *Fortuna* of *Forum Boarium*. Probably this *Fortuna* was later to be called *Fortuna Virgo* (and also *Virginalis*). In this temple a cult statue was placed, clothed with a *toga undulata*.[20] The meaning of *undulata* remains a mystery,[21] but Jacqueline Champeaux thinks that it was the archaic Etruscan royal toga of Servius Tullius.[22] This could explain why some Romans believed the statue to represent the Etruscan king himself.[23] The common view was, however, that the statue

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[15] For a discussion of the coin, see Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, pp. 64-67, and *id.*, II: *Les transformations de Fortuna sous la république* (Palais Farnèse: École française de Rome, 1987), pp. 250-252.
[16] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 504: 'There is no evidence that the cult of *Fortuna* in Latium and especially at Praeneste dates back to older times than it does in Rome'.
[17] She indeed does not belong to the *di indigetes*.
[18] OVID, *Fasti* VI. 773 ff; DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS, *Romanae antiquitates* IV. 40.7.
[19] LIVY, *Ab urbe condita* X. 46, 14.
[20] PLINY, *Naturalis Historia* VIII. 194.
[21] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 512.
[22] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, pp. 296-297.
[23] OVID, *Fasti* VI. 570-624.

portrayed *Fortuna Virgo*.[24] The statue was further also veiled. Those who believe the goddess to be of Etruscan origin, see a similarity with the veiled goddesses of fate in Etruscan religion.[25] However, the veil can more easily be associated with marriage.[26] *Fortuna* (*Virgo*) would then preside over the sexual union of man and wife, especially on the wedding night, to guarantee fertility. The bride, who had little control over her future life, sought the goddess's blessing and protection on her important transition to her married state.[27]

## 1.3. *Fors Fortuna, "dea quae fert"*

The difficulty is to trace the function of the archaic goddess (*Fors*) *Fortuna* considering she had such diverse cults in Italy. The etymology of the word does not help much. *Fortuna* is generally thought to derive from the root *fortus*, analogous to the origin of the god *Portunus*, who presided over *portus*, the harbour.[28] The word *fortus* is connected with the verb *ferre*, and from it is further derived the word *fors*.[29] Initially, *Fortuna* (or *Fors Fortuna*) would mean something as *dea quae fert*, "the goddess who brings". This explanation remains very vague. The question is: what does *Fortuna* bring? Here, opinions differ. Those who claim that the early *Fortuna* was a goddess of women prefer to translate the word "ferre" as "*to bear*", and connect it with fertility and childbirth.[30] L. De Jaegere thinks that what the goddess brings is people's *sors* (= lot), stressing the oracular function of the goddess. In particular women were anxious about their uncertain future, whether about their marriage, or about giving birth.[31] I. Kajanto suggests that *Fortuna* brought good luck, success, without relating her specifically to women.[32] Jacqueline Champeaux argues that *Fortuna* brought originally (agrarian) fecundity, something which was not restricted to birth and women. She further stressed the fundamental link between birth and destiny, which she sees manifested in the

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[24] PLINY, *Naturalis Historia* VIII. 197; DIO LVIII. 7, 2-3. It is improbable that she stood for *Pudicitia*, as G. Wissowa (1912, p. 257) argues.

[25] J. Champeaux, 1982, I, p. 284; K. Latte 1960, p. 180: 'Die Verhüllung möchte man in diesem Zusammenhang auf etruskischen Einfluß zurückführen und die *di involuti*, die etruskischen Schicksalsgottheiten, vergleichen. *Fortuna* wäre dann hier als der geheimnisvolle Schicksal aufgefaßt'.

[26] Arnobius (II. 67) recounts the custom of brides hanging their youth's toga in the temple of *Fortuna Virginalis* as an offering.

[27] J. Champeaux 1982, I, p. 302.

[28] L. De Jaegere 1940, p. 37; Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, p. 429.

[29] For instance G. Herzog-Hauser, 'Tyche und Fortuna' in *Wiener Studien* 63 (1948), p.158: '*Etymologisch galt und gilt der lebendige Zusammenhang von Fors-Fortuna mit dem Verbum ferre.*' He gives several examples of ancient authors where the words *fors* is linked with *ferre*; also E. Meyer-Landrut 1997, p. 9; F.M. Lazarus, 'On the Meaning of *Fors Fortuna*: A Hint from Terence', *American Journal of Philology* 106 (1985), 359-367 (p. 360).

[30] For instance, J. Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), p. 85: 'The Roman *Fortuna* was originally a goddess of fertility (the name is probably derived from *ferre*, 'to bear')'.

[31] L. De Jaegere 1940, p. 37: '*Fortuna* had de macht de sluier van de onzekere toekomst op te heffen; men raadpleegde haar bij voorkeur op de gewichtigste ogenblikken van het leven' ('*Fortuna* had the power to lift the veil from an uncertain future; people mainly consulted her at the most important moments of their lives').

[32] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 505.

*tria Fata*, which were equivalent to the *Parcae*[33] Like L. De Jaegere, she thus manages to bring the idea of women (and birth) closer to fate, making it easier to explain her later identification with *Τύχη*.

### 1.3.1. *Fortuna*'s alleged close link with women and fertility

Several facts make indeed a link between *Fortuna* and women feasible. There was *Fortuna* of the *Forum Boarium*, known as *Fortuna Virgo*, or *Fortuna Virginalis*. This temple stood close to temple of the *Mater Matuta*, and had the same festival day, which is a further argument to regard this *Fortuna* as a goddess of women.[34] There is another famous cult of *Fortuna* connected with women, and that is the *Fortuna Muliebris*, of which also Augustine has something to say.[35]

Also the famous *Fortuna Primigenia* of Praeneste could be brought in connection with women. The statue there depicts a woman with two children (apparently the children Jupiter and Juno, on the lap of *Fortuna*), and Cicero adds that especially women worshipped the goddess.[36] At her sanctuary there is also found an old inscription, which reads: 'NATIONU(S) CRATIA FORTUNA DIOVO FILEIA PRIMOCENIA'[37], i.e. 'NATIONIS GRATIA FORTUNAE IOVIS FILIAE PRIMIGENIAE' (*'In gratitude for childbirth to Fortuna Primigenia, daughter of Jupiter'*).[38] How to explain the inconsistency between *Fortuna* being on the one hand the mother of Jupiter and Juno, and on the other hand the daughter of Jupiter is still a matter of debate among scholars. The puzzling epithet PRIMIGENIA (firstborn / primary?) only adds to the problem.[39]

The link between *Fortuna* and *Τύχη* could then have come via the function of her as an oracle goddess at Praeneste.[40] Possibly a wrong etymology was involved in linking a fertility goddess with chance. This happened to the goddess *Parca*, who was originally a goddess of childbirth, *Parica*, but later wrongly derived from *pars*, and consequently identified with the

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[33] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, pp. 435-437.
[34] Otto, s.v. 'Fortuna', in *RE* VII.1 (1910), col. 14.
[35] This will be discussed in the chapter on *De civitate Dei*. Her temple stood at the fourth milestone of the *Via Latina* (VALERIUS MAXIMUS, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium* I. 8,4).
[36] CICERO, *De div.* II. 85: 'Locus... propter Iovis pueri, qui lactens, cum Iounone Fortunae in gremio sedens mammam adpetens, castissime colitur a matribus' (*'The site ... close by the [statue] of the infant Iuppiter, who, unweaned, is sitting with Iuno in the lap of Fortuna, eager for the breast, is most devoutly revered by mothers'*).
[37] *CIL* I² 60.
[38] It is however possible that it refers to cattle, according to Mommsen; W.W. Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic: An Introduction to the study of the Religion of the Romans* (London: Macmillan, 1916), p. 168 n. 3.
[39] W.W. Fowler changed his mind about the meaning of this term. This, he gallantly admits in his book *Roman Essays and Interpretations* (London: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 64. He came to regard translating *primigenia* as 'firstborn' to be wrong, preferring the meaning "original", or "primary". This is also the opinion of Jacqueline Champeaux 1990, p. 104 n. 2: *'...le sens de l'épiclèse Primigenia et la relation de Fortuna à Jupiter (divinité 'Primordiale', et non fille 'première-née' de dieu)'*.
[40] G. Wissowa 1912, p. 261.

Greek *Moira*.[41] The ambiguity of *ferre*, which can mean "to bring" but also "to bear", might have caused this confusion.[42]

### 1.3.2. *Fortuna*'s alleged Etruscan origin

There came a strong reaction from I. Kajanto to loosen the link between *Fortuna* and women. He argues that it would be difficult to explain the evolution of *Fortuna* to adopt a plethora of particulars such as *Fortuna Barbata*, *Fortuna huiusce dei*, *Fortuna Equestris*, when starting with a fertility goddess or one closely bound up with women. He thinks that the identification of *Fortuna* with the Greek *Τύχη*, as personified chance, remains difficult to explain if she was originally a fertility goddess. I. Kajanto argues therefore that from the beginning she was an Etruscan goddess of good-luck.[43] Quoting Varro (*De lingua latina* V. 74) as evidence for an early cult of *Fortuna* among the Sabines is unconvincing, since the ancient writer was wrong on other occasions when claiming that *Vesta*, *Salus*, *Fons* and *Fides* came from the Sabines.[44]

Etruscans were notorious for the importance they attached to the idea of Fate, and the chief god *tin* had helping deities, the *di superiores* et *involuti*, and they all probably were deities of Fate. One can now assume that the Romans, confronted with the high culture of the Etruscans and, in particular with their well-developed concept of Fate, had difficulties understanding such an abstract deity. As a result they gave this deity *cognomina*, which conferred on this vague deity a more definite sphere of influence.[45] The majority of these names therefore do not indicate the different functions of the goddess, but they pinpoint her specific radius of action, in time (*Fortuna huisque diei*), place (*Fortuna balneorum* (*CIL* VI 182), *Fortuna* of a city) or for a particular group of people (*Fortuna Equestris*), families (*Fortuna Tulliana* (*CIL* VI 8706) and individuals (*Fortuna Augusta*).[46] Its vague concept became

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[41] G. Wissowa 1912, p. 264.

[42] There is a similar dual meaning in the etymology of *Τύχη*, coming from the stem τυχ-. This produced the word τύχειν, and further the words τεύχ-ειν and τυγχάν-ειν. The latter can have a more active meaning (the cause), as well as a more passive one (the result) (G. Herzog-Hauser 1948, p. 156 & I. Kajanto 1981, p. 525).

[43] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 505: 'It is probable that both in Rome and at Praeneste *Fortuna* was in origin a goddess of good luck'.

[44] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 504.

[45] J. Carter 1900, p. 68: 'Summing up, we may say that functional *cognomina* are practically lacking in the case of *Fortuna*, and that her cognomina are employed principally to limit and thus emphasize her protecting activity in point of time, place, or person'.

[46] See the list provided by Kajanto (1981, p. 511). He counted more than 90 different epithets of *Fortuna*. In his article "Notes on the Cult of Fortuna" (*Arctos: Acta philologica fennica* XVII (1983), 13-20), I. Kajanto updates this list with a few new epithets, and he deleted one: *Fortuna imperii*.

more tangible in these epithets, each revealing the power (*numen*) in a specific area, and each inaugurated on a special occasion.[47]

The reasons for regarding *Fortuna* to be originally an Etruscan goddess are impressive. The oldest sanctuary was that of *Fors Fortuna* at Rome, and this possibly dates back to the period of Etruscan hegemony in Rome. She had no special connection with women: '*Fors Fortuna* was obviously an old name for a goddess of good luck, created before the Latin word came to have the specific meaning of "chance"'.[48] Further, the famous oracle of the *Fortuna Primigenia* worked with *sortes*, the drawing of lots, and this kind of divination seems to have been found in Italy only within regions of Etruscan hegemony, and Praeneste certainly belonged to it. The statue where *Fortuna* is giving breast to Iuno and Jupiter has been attributed to Etruscan influence by K. Latte; even the terms *Iovis puer* and *Iovis filia* found at Praeneste may have some Etruscan origin. The two earliest temples of *Fortuna* in Rome were said to be founded by Servius Tullius, and his Etruscan origin has been attested in a famous speech of the emperor Claudius.[49] The Romans later identified *Fortuna* with the Etruscan *Nortia*, a great deity at Volsinii.[50] W.W. Fowler suggests: 'The *Fortuna* of Servius was the equivalent of this *Nortia*, to whom the Roman plebs gave a name with which they were in some way already familiar'. [51] Another line of reasoning concerns the veiled image of (presumably) *Fortuna* in the Forum Boarium, which recalls the *di involuti* of the Etruscans. In this case the veiling of the image would be a symbol of mysterious Fate.[52]

### 1.3.3. *Fortuna* as the goddess who brings fecundity

In her thorough study, Jacqueline Champeaux puts forward that *Fortuna* was originally a pre-urban local goddess of agrarian fecundity. When it is said that Servius Tullius founded a temple of *Fortuna*, this does not mean that he introduced her in Rome: it may well simply

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[47] W.W. Fowler 1916, p. 168: 'There is really no difficulty in understanding why what seems to us at first sight a very vague conception, 'the goddess who brings' should not have meant something very real and concrete to the early Italian mind'. As we have seen, I. Kajanto complements the name to 'the goddess who brings good luck'. By specifying in which area she brings good luck, can be seen as a typical reaction of a more practical Roman, who would find it difficult to deal with such an abstract notion in se. Nevertheless, the general notion of fecundity (although originally only in the agrarian field) could have resulted in a similar explosion of cognomina denoting in which area she offered "fruitfulness". Needless to say, the *cornu copia*, one of her attributes, was typical of a fecundity goddess.

[48] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 505.

[49] TACITUS, *Annales* II. 24; This is further confirmed by the discovery of the famous tomb at Vulci. W.W. Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic: An Introduction to the Study of the Religion of the Romans* (London, Macmillan, 1916), p. 171: 'It would seem that we may consider it as highly probable that if Servius did really institute the cult of *Fortuna* at Rome, that cult came with him from Etruria'.

[50] See JUVENAL *Satires* X, 74; MARTIANUS CAPELLA, *De Nuptiis philologiae et Mercurii.* I. 88: '...quam alii Sortem asserunt, Nemesinque nonnulli, Tychenque quam plures aut Nortiam'. (*'Some call her Sors, some Nemesis, many Tyche, and others Nortia'*).

[51] W.W. Fowler 1916, p. 172; J. Carter (1900, p. 60) expresses his scepticism about such an identification.

[52] K. Latte 1960, p. 180; G. Wissowa (1912, p. 257 n. 5) finds such a link not convincing.

have been that he gave an already existing local goddess public status.[53] Only gradually did *Fortuna* undergo Etruscan influence, which underscored her connection with people's lot. Her action radius was not restricted to women.

The archaic *Fors Fortuna* originally stood for great astral transitions; she was a goddess of movement, not of chaos, but of richness. Her festival day was on 24th of June, and this should be connected with the summer solstice, during which water (*Tiberina descensio*) and fire played an important role in the ritual to guarantee the fecundity of the soil.[54] Later, she also came to present social transition: she was the guardian of plebeians and slaves, who were looking for social advancement. Slaves hoped to be liberated, and plebeians wished to obtain curial honours. Only in a later stage did (*Fors*) *Fortuna* preside over real chance, and she became the goddess who had lifted up the slave Servius Tullius to the royal throne.[55]

Also the archaic cult of *Fortuna Barbata*, like that of *Fortuna Virgo*, can be linked with an important transition, but this time in a boy's life. He could call upon the goddess's protection when he was undergoing the physiologic changes of puberty. Perhaps he offered his first shavings to the goddess, performing the rite of *depositio barbae*.[56] More important in a boy's life was *Fortuna Virilis*, linked with the moment he would take up his *toga virilis* (at the age of sixteen). One is reminded of Patricius' joy when he saw his son Augustine at the bathhouse, '*showing signs of virility and the stirrings of adolescence*'.[57] This would have been the moment for a pagan to seek blessing and protection from *Fortuna Virilis*, because it announced a new stage in his life.[58]

As mentioned before, Jacqueline Champeaux sees little difficulty in linking her idea of *Fortuna* as a goddess of fecundity with one's personal lot in life. From birth onwards, *Fortuna* could be consulted about the child's destiny, performing a role comparable with the *Parcae*, the Roman equivalent of the three *Moirae*.[59]

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[53] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, p. 450.
[54] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, p. 234.
[55] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, p. 245.
[56] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, p. 400: 'Comme leurs homologues féminines [sc. *Fortuna Virgo* et *Fortuna Muliebris*], *Fortuna Virilis* et *Fortuna Barbata* ont sans doute, á leurs origines, sacralisé le passage physiologique de la puberté et l'intégration au groupe sociologique des adultes'.
[57] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* II. iii (6): 'me ille pater in balneis vidit pubescentem et inquieta indutum adulescentia'.
[58] A. Rousselle states: 'At these first manifestations of sexual maturity the young man would be the object of renewed attentions' (A. Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 59, quoted from J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 120).
[59] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, pp. 436-437.

# 2. SOME ASPECTS OF THE WORSHIP OF *FORTUNA*

## 2.1. Humble Worshippers of *Fors Fortuna*

A noteworthy aspect of the worship of *Fortuna* was that its worshippers usually came from the lower strata of society. We know from Ovid that especially the common people frequented the sanctuary of *Fors Fortuna*, when describing its popular festival in his *Fasti*.[60] Servius Tullius was the traditional hero of the plebs, and the festival was even open to slaves. This is understandable, since the ancient king was born as a slave. Artisans and trades people dedicated votive inscriptions at this temple, while we can read in Columella[61] that *Fors Fortuna* appeared as a patron goddess of the peasants especially at market-days.[62] Also many dedications at Praeneste were made during the Republic by artisans and other common people, even slaves. This somehow weakens the alleged tight connection between the *Fortuna* of Praeneste and women.

In the Imperial period, all social strata were more fully represented as dedicators of votive offerings,[63] but *Fortuna* remained a goddess of the common people. Literati such as Juvenal looked down upon her worshippers:

> ...Sed quid
> turba Remi? Sequitur Fortunam ut semper et odit
> damnatos.[64]
>
> *What about the Roman rabble? They follow Fortuna as always, and detest her victims.*

Juvenal ends his tenth *Satire* with the famous lines about *Fortuna*:

> Nullum numen habes si sit prudentia, nos te,
> nos facimus, Fortuna, deam caeloque locamus.[65]
>
> *You have no divine power, Fortuna, if there would be good sense; it is we, we, who make you a goddess and position you in the heavens.*

Pliny, too, complains about the overwhelming attraction the goddess *Fortuna* exercises over the Romans in a frequently quoted passage:

> Toto quippe mundo et omnibus locis omnibusque horis omnium vocibus Fortuna sola invocatur ac nominatur, una accusatur, rea una agitur, una cogitatur, sola laudatur, sola arguitur et cum conviciis colitur: volubilis, a plerisque vero et caeca existimata, vaga, inconstans, incerta, varia indignorumque fautrix. Huic omnia expensa, huic omnia

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[60] OVID, *Fasti* VI, 733ff; also CICERO, *De finibus* V, 70.
[61] COLUMELLA, *De re rustica* X, 31.
[62] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 505.
[63] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 506.
[64] JUVENAL, *Satires* X. 72-4.
[65] JUVENAL, *Satires* X. 365-6.

> feruntur accepta, et in tota ratione mortalium sola utramque paginam facit; adeoque obnoxii sumus sorti, ut sors ipsa pro deo sit, qua deus probatur incertus. [66]
>
> *All through the world, in all places and at all hours Fortuna alone is invoked and named by the voices of all men; she is the one who is accused, the one who is blamed, the one thought in men's minds, the one object of praise, the one rebuked and visited with reproaches. She is deemed volatile and indeed by most men blind as well, wayward, inconstant, uncertain, fickle in her favours and favouring the unworthy. To her is debited all that is spent and credited all that is received, she alone fills both pages in the whole of mortals' account. We are so much at the mercy of "Chance" (sors), that "Chance", by which God is made uncertain, is our god.*

Linda W. Rutland comments:

> Pliny presents himself as the scientist, with apparent Stoic inclinations [...] He abhors the popular clamour over the "gods", and includes as one of those popular quirks the ubiquitous *Fortuna*.[67]

Both Juvenal and Pliny, regard *Fortuna* not so much as the power behind prosperity and good-luck, but the one behind blind chance, *Fortuna caeca.*

## 2.2. Well-known *Fortuna* cults during the Empire

### 2.2.1. *Fortuna redux* and *Fortuna* of a particular city

The major function of *Fortuna* was to bring protection, prosperity and success. Many of her archaic cults, such as that of *Fortuna Barbata*, disappeared. Two more recent cults remained important until late in the Empire: *Fortuna Redux* and *Fortuna* of a particular city. The cult of the *Fortuna Redux* was created to beseech a safe return of the emperor from foreign and often dangerous expeditions.[68] Augustus established this cult in 19 BC on his return from Syria. Its worship together with the *Fortuna Augusta or Augusti*, the guardian spirit of the emperor, was an expression of loyalty to the State and the reigning emperor, and a way to wish the emperor well.

The *Fortuna* of a city was an important deity, very common in the Greek world to safeguard one's *polis*. She protected the city, and its worship can also be seen as an expression of loyalty, this time for one's own city. One important event of the 4th century underlines the long-standing importance of the cult. Augustine claimed that Constantine had found a new all-Christian city, without any pagan temples:

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[66] PLINY, *Naturalis Historia* II. 22.

[67] Linda W. Rutland, '*Fortuna Sola Invocatur*: Pliny's Statement', *Classical Bulletin* 56 (1979), 28-31 (p. 29).

[68] Many inscriptions are found all over the Empire, dedicated to this deity: for instance *CIL* VIII 4874, 6944, 16667, 18059, 18215, 18216. *CIL* VIII 6944: [FORTU]NAE REDUCI
AUG(USTAE) SACRUM.
PRO SALUTE ET FELICISSIMO REDITU
IMP. CAESARIS L. SEPTIMI SEVERI PII...

> cui etiam condere civitatem Romano imperio sociam, velut ipsius Romae filiam, sed sine aliquo daemonum templo simulacroque concessit.[69]
>
> *And God even granted him the honour of founding a city, associated with the Roman Empire, the daughter, one might say, of Rome herself, but a city which contained not a single temple or image of any demon.*

He was not entirely correct. We know that Constantine actually did place a few pagan temples in Constantinople. One, and not the least important, was the *Fortuna of Rome*, the protecting deity of the new Rome.[70] True, the emperor did not allow any animal sacrifice there,[71] but the fact that he did build it, shows again the continued significance of *Fortuna* as a guardian divinity.

Remarkably, *Fors Fortuna*, the oldest cult, gained in the 4th c. AD a new life under the stimulus of oriental religions of the Sun. This highlighted again her primitive cosmic character. On the coins of AD 311-312 *Fors Fortuna* appears in connection with the Sun god, and she sometimes even appears in place of him (*fig. 3*).

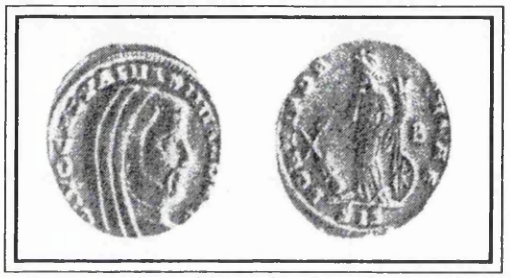

*Figure* 3: consecration coin issued by Licentius (AD 311-312)
- Galerius, made divine
- *Fors Fortuna* with *cornu copia*, rudder, globe and wheel

## 2.2.2. *Fortuna*'s extraordinary success

Maybe the most remarkable thing about *Fortuna* is that she was arguably the only ancient Roman goddess whose status only seemed to have grown since the decline of the polytheistic Roman religion, and she even profited from the tendency to monotheism. The attested name *Fortuna panthea*[72] and the well-known statues of *Isis-Fortuna* reveal that she had the potential to become the sole goddess of the universe. In Fronto's correspondence *Fortuna* is called *dearum praecipua.*[73] The close connection of *Fortuna* with *fatum*[74] might be helpful in understanding this evolution. *Fortuna* was a kind of hybrid deity: she had a firm footing within the Roman pantheon, but she also became closely tied up with *fatum*. The

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[69] AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* V. 25. Augustine probably picked this up from Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, who stated that Constantinople was a wholly Christian city, without a single pagan temple.

[70] ZOSIMUS II. 31: '*There was in Byzantium a huge forum consisting of four porticos, and at the end of one of them, which has numerous steps leading to it, he built two temples. Statues were set up in them, in one Rhea, mother of the gods, and in the other, the statue of Fortuna Roma*'.

[71] Diana Bowder, *The Age of Constantine and Julian* (London: Elek, 1978), p. 36: 'One pagan feature does, however, seem to have been omitted: there were no hecatombs of slaughtered animals to win the favour of the gods of Constantinople'. To the *Fortuna* of the City, there were offered bloodless sacrifices instead (p. 35).

[72] *CIL* VI 30867, *CIL* X 5800 (I. Kajanto 1981, p. 516).

[73] FRONTO, *Epistulae ad M. Caesarem et invicem* l. iii (7).

[74] The relation between *fatum* and *Fortuna* will be discussed in greater depth in the chapter on Stoicism.

goddess *Fortuna* had two great advantages over the concept of *fatum*: she was a well-known personification of something closely linked with fate, while lacking its religiously unprofitable rigidity. It was a waste of time to implore inexorable fate, while this concept was not personified. The *Parcae* came closest to such a characterization, but they had no cult. The goddess *Fortuna* offered an opening to try and influence future outcomes. With the decay of the traditional Roman religion in the late republic, she can be regarded as the deity who intrinsically had the best chances to survive.

## 2.3. *Fortuna*: Personification of Blind Chance

It is possible to draw many parallels between the Roman *Fortuna* and the Greek *Τύχη*, but there is also some dissimilarity. G. Herzog-Hauser argued that 'although they have etymologically nothing in common, there exists between them a strong, and intrinsic well-founded congruity'.[75] The meaning of *Τύχη* seems to waver between bringer of good luck, which she shares with the archaic *Fortuna*, but she was also seen, quite early on, as a fickle power. This aspect became more dominant during the Hellenistic period, where she was 'increasingly regarded as a personification of chance, a fickle and malicious entity'.[76]

Both the words *δυστυχία* and *εὐτυχία* are derived from *Τύχη*, but for *Fortuna* we have only the word *infortunatus*, which can be further indication that, originally, *Fortuna* was less ambiguously a goddess bringing prosperity.[77] However, there existed a *Fortuna Bona* and a *Fortuna Mala*, which indicates that at the time she may already have become much closer associated with *Τύχη*. This can also be witnessed in a text of Augustine. He defends the Bible translation "*beata vel felix*" for the Greek word *εὐτύχη*, while this comes closer to "*bona fortuna*".[78] This was done, he says, because otherwise people who worshipped *Fortuna* would think that the authority of the Bible would acknowledge the existence of such a *numen*.[79]

The circumstances wherein *Τύχη* started to dominate as a fickle power resemble the situation at Rome when *Fortuna* gained in prominence as such a power, i.e. at the end of the republic. The decline in belief in the Olympic gods went together with the rise of strong individual figures, who profoundly changed the political system, such as Alexander the

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[75] G. Herzog-Hauser 1948, p. 163: 'Und so sehen wir denn, daß zwischen der griechischen und römischen Schicksalsgöttin, die etymologisch nichts miteinander gemein haben, ein feste, innerlich begründete Zusammengehörigkeit besteht'.

[76] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 526.

[77] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, p. 433.

[78] AUGUSTINE, *Quaestionum in heptateuchum* I. 91: Quod latini habent [...]: beata vel felix facta sum, graeci habent: *εὐτύχη*, quod magis bonam fortunam significat'.

[79] AUGUSTINE, *Quaestionum in heptateuchum* I. 91; see also Mary D. Madden, *The Pagan Divinities and their Worship as Depicted in the Works of Saint Augustine exclusive of the City of God,* The Catholic University of America Patristic Studies 24 (Washington (DC): Cath. Univ. of America Press, 1930), p. 64.

Great. This parallels the breakdown of belief in the Roman pantheon, at the end of the republic, and the rise of Sulla, Marius, Pompey the Great, Julius Caesar, and Augustus, who changed the face of the republic for good. Sulla claimed a special relationship with *Felicitas* (*εὐτυχία*) whereas Pompey did so with *Fortuna*, and Caesar seemed to have played with the idea of a personal *Fortuna*.[80] Just as the slave Servius Tullius had the incredible good fortune to become king, so did these men obtain extraordinary powers in defiance of the established order by being richly favoured by *Fortuna*.[81] However, the political upheaval and religious breakdown were two (in this case not unrelated) factors wherein a more malicious understanding of a "Schicksalsgöttin" could flourish, so that in literature *Fortuna* became above all the personification of blind chance, like Hellenistic *Τύχη*.[82]

*Fortuna*, originally a proto-Roman goddess of fecundity, had the capacity to become the destructive power *Fortuna/Τύχη* probably through the earlier influence of the Etruscan concept of fate.[83] Since this more malevolent side of *Fortuna* seems to have lived above all a literary life, this will be discussed in the course of the next chapter.

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[80] Jacqueline Champeaux 1982, I, chapter VI: L'âge des "imperatores" (pp. 215-291).
[81] Augustus would found a temple of *Fortuna Redux* (19 BC) and of *Fortuna Augusta* (AD 3), but he also justified and promoted his extraordinary good fortune via his horoscope (see the section on this topic within Stoicism).
[82] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 505.
[83] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 505.

# CHAPTER II

# *FORTUNA* IN HISTORIOGRAPHY:

## SALLUST

## SALLUST & AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS

## 1. DIFFICULTIES IN THE STUDY OF *FORTUNA*

### 1.1. Sallust's Style and the Complexity of *Fortuna*

Several articles and books have been devoted to the theme of *Fortuna* in Sallust's work,[1] which illustrates not only the significance of the topic, but also the difficulty to pin down this concept. The various shades of meaning of *Fortuna* make this task inevitably hard, but to do so within Sallust's works is even the more demanding. His careful weighing of words, and the importance he attaches to the overall structure of his composition, encourages the reader to look for a deeper unity behind his ostensibly inconsistent use of the concept throughout his works.[2] E. Tiffou[3] detects even a shift in meaning of *Fortuna* during the progress of his writings, but this thesis ultimately depends too much on the scarce fragments of the last work, *Historiae*. Of this work, only a few passages of the introduction and some speeches are preserved. This is insufficient to give an adequate picture from the work as a whole, not to mention his use of *Fortuna*. I will therefore tentatively assume that

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[1] H. Erkell, *Augustus, Felicitas, Fortuna. Lateinische Wortstudien* (Göteborg: Elander, 1952), pp. 147-160; G. Schweicher, *Schicksal und Glück in den Werken Sallusts und Caesars*, diss. (Köln, 1963); D.J. Stewart, 'Sallust and Fortuna', *History and Theory* 7 (1968), 298-317; E. Tiffou, 'Salluste et la Fortuna', *Phoenix* 31 (1977), 349-360; Mariangela Scarsi, 'Fortuna in Sallustio', *Studi Noniani* 7 (1982), 239-245; R.P. Hock, 'The Role of Fortuna in Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*', *Gerion* 3 (1985), 141-150.

[2] K. Büchner, *Sallust*, Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften NS 2.7 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter – Universitätsverlag, 1982), p. 307; P. Mc Gushin 1971, p. 89: 'There occur what at first sight are contradictory statements concerning fortuna, but the contradiction is only an apparent one'; R.J. Hock 1985, p. 150: 'commentators [...] have failed to note the consistency with which fortuna is presented as a theme'.

[3] He argues that Sallust increasingly had to rely upon the concept of *Fortuna* to explain events which otherwise were hard to fit within his advocated general ideas on history. E. Tiffou 1977, p. 359: 'Tout ce qui dérive de cet idéal ne peut se justifier de façon rationnelle; d'où la nécessité de faire appel à un malin génie: la fortuna.' R.J. Hock (1985, p. 142 n. 7) remarks: 'Tiffou criticises Sallust for employing fortuna as a last resort to explain the inexplicable'.

Sallust held a consistent view of *Fortuna* throughout his whole oeuvre.[4] H. Erkell distinguishes within Sallust's *opus* no less than seven shades of meaning behind the multifaceted concept of *Fortuna*.[5] The downside of looking upon the use of *Fortuna* in this way is that, because of its fragmentation into different categories, it becomes more difficult to find a unifying concept behind Sallust's treatment of the word in his work. The divergent interpretations of scholars - *Fortuna* is considered to be a rhetorical cliché[6], an historical agent[7], a *deus ex machina*[8], and a *malin génie*[9] - illustrate that a well-defined idea of *Fortuna* might in the end prove to be a chimera, and that Sallust rather carelessly availed himself of this word.

## 1.2. The Search for a Unifying Concept of *Fortuna*

In his article 'Sallust and *fortuna*' D.J. Stewart assigns to *Fortuna* a central role within Sallust's view on Roman history:

> Sallust [...] in the Bellum Catilinae is trying to say something of the greatest importance about the whole of Roman history, although he does so by means of a device that is perhaps deceptive as to its character, maybe too much so for the successful conveying of his message.[10]

The device alluded to is, of course, the concept of *Fortuna*. If this proposal is true, then Sallust's deeper understanding of Roman history is indeed closely related to his view of *Fortuna*. I will argue that Sallust indeed used *Fortuna* in a consistent way, thereby conveying a fundamental insight in Roman history and society.

Many apparent contradictions between *Fortuna* passages can be resolved if one considers their context, particularly by verifying whose point of view is being expressed, and in what kind of situation *Fortuna* is mentioned. Different people usually relate in a different

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[4] The issue of consistency in Sallust's work within the whole of his *opus*, is not central to this survey, since as already has been established, Sallust's first work is the most important one to Augustine.

[5] H. Erkell 1962, pp. 147-156. These are 'Herkunft und soziale Stellung', 'ökonomische Lage', 'Schicksal', 'Zufall', 'Günstige Gelegenheit', 'Glück' and 'allmächtige launische *Fortuna-Tyche*'. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* lists twelve (!) subdivisions of meaning for the word *Fortuna* (pointed out by R.P. Hock 1985, p. 141).

[6] G. Schweicher 1963, p. 72: 'eine Art Chiffre'; C. Neumeister, *Die Geschichtsauffassung Sallusts im 'Catilina' und ihre Behandlung in der Sekundarstufe II*, (Frankfurt a. M., Berlin, Munich, 1983), p. 14: 'eine pathetische Redeweise', (quoted from B. Latte, 'Der Wandel in Sallusts Geschichtsauffassung: vom Bellum Catilinae zum Bellum Iugurthinum', *Maia* 40 (1988), p. 275). H. Erkell 1952, p. 131: '*... ist sie dem Römer wesentlich ein literarisches Motiv, oder ist sie ihm zur Weltanschauung geworden?*'

[7] T. F. Scanlon, *The Influence of Thucydides on Sallust*, Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissen-schaften N. S. II.70 (Heidelberg, 1980), pp. 46-47.

[8] E. Tiffou 1977, p. 353: 'La *fortuna* est donc un *deus ex machina* qui rend compte de façon formelle de difficultés inextricables'. Cf. F. Klinger, 'Uber die Einleitung der Historien Sallusts', *Hermes* 63 (1928), 165-192 (p. 166).

[9] E. Tiffou 1977, p. 359.

[10] D. J. Stewart, 'Sallust and fortuna', *History & Theory* 7 (1968), 298-317 (p. 298).

manner to *Fortuna*.[11] For instance, a depraved Catiline is given a different view of *Fortuna*'s role in life from that of the author of *Bellum Catilinae* himself.[12] It is very likely that Sallust, far from using *Fortuna* carelessly, associated someone's attitude towards *Fortuna* with the morality of that person. At the core of this investigation lies then the analysis of those *Fortuna* passages in *Bellum Catilinae*, wherein Sallust himself is commenting on Roman history. These will mostly come from the introduction, but there is at least one such passage within the narrative proper.

## 1.3. The Tutelary Deity *Fortuna rei publicae*

In *BeCa* 41. 3, Sallust mentions *Fortuna rei publicae*.[13] She seems to signify the goddess who brings good luck, in this case, to the *respublica*, fulfilling her traditional function as tutelary deity. The context makes clear that this must be what Sallust is referring to. When the Gallic tribe of the Allobroges, after much deliberation, finally decided to report the conspiracy of Catiline to a Roman official, Sallust acknowledges: 'tandem vicit Fortuna rei publicae'. Cicero commented about the same event in his speech to the people as follows: 'Id non divinitus esse factum putatis?' (*'Would you not think this event to have come about by a god?'*).[14] One can wonder whether Sallust, too, is not hinting here at a divine agent. We know, however, that the concept of *Fortuna rei publicae* led primarily a literary life,[15] which makes it more likely that he used the goddess here merely as a literary device.

It is nevertheless worth examining what Sallust's attitude was towards Roman religion in general. Like his great exemplar Thucydides, he explains historical events solely from a human dimension, and the gods are only mentioned when men in the story claimed their allegiance, or depended on them for aid.[16] T.F. Scanlon concludes that the concept of

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[11] P. McGushin, *C. Sallustius Crispus, Bellum Catilinae: A Commentary*, Mnemosyne supplementum 45 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), p. 89.

[12] D.J. Stewart (1968, p. 306 n. 23) recognizes a difference in attitude towards *Fortuna* between the conspirators headed by Catiline, and the historian Sallust. Also R.J. Hock (1985, 141-150) sees Catiline relating differently to *Fortuna* than Sallust does.

[13] H. Erkell (1952, p. 149) lists this reference to *Fortuna* under the category 'Glück'; R.J. Hock (1985, pp. 142-143) regards it as one of the crucial passages to learn about Sallust's view on *Fortuna*, and for that reason he comments upon it comprehensively; the other passage (*BeCa* 53. 3) will be touched upon later.

[14] CICERO, *In Catilinam* III. 22; I owe this reference of Cicero to R.J. Hock (1985, p. 142).

[15] She seems especially to be found within historical writing and speeches. Nevertheless, the idea of such a "literary" goddess fits perfectly with the notion of *Fortuna* as a protecting deity. See I. Kajanto, s.v. 'Fortuna' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.17.1 (1981), pp. 524-525, who made the suggestion to translate it as: "the good luck of the state". H. Erkell (1952, p. 149) points out that there is no literary or archaeological evidence of a temple devoted to this goddess. He suggests that this literary goddess originated from the Greek protecting deity *Tyche*, in the function of *Τύχη Πόλεως* and *Τύχη Βασιλέως*.

[16] T. F. Scanlon 1980, p. 42; R. Syme, 1964, p. 247: 'He is not enamoured of the word "religio" – he uses it only to describe a cult or superstitious usage (*BeJu* 75. 9; *Hist.* III. 50)'.

*Fortuna* largely replaced the Roman pantheon in Sallust's work, but a *Fortuna* standing for the notion of 'chance', not for a divinity of good luck.[17]

Sallust did not disdain Roman religion as such. He regarded neglecting the gods as one of the signs of Rome's moral decline after 146 BC (*BeCa* 10. 4), and he sharply contrasts the contemporary Romans, who were disrespectful towards the gods, with their ancestors, who were *religiosissumi* (*BeCa* 12. 3-4).[18]

## 1.4. Unpredictable *Fortuna caeca*

The most debated *Fortuna* passages among scholars are also those which are the most relevant to this study. In Sallust's general reflections on Roman history, *Fortuna* shows all the characteristics of a malicious, unpredictable force taking control of the historical events. Scholars usually label this concept *Fortuna/Tyche*,[19] but in the present thesis the term *Fortuna caeca* will be normally used, because *caeca* was one of her most characteristic features of her in literature. H. Erkell identified within *Bellum Catilinae* four such references.[20] The following two are perhaps the most significant ones:[21]

> Sed ubi ... Carthago aemula imperi Romani ab stirpe interiit, cuncta maria terraeque patebant; saevire Fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit. (*BeCa* 10. 1)[22]
>
> *But when ... Carthage, Rome's rival for supreme power, utterly perished, every land and sea lay open. It was then that Fortuna began to rage and throw everything into confusion.*

Then there is the famous line, quoted twice by Augustine in *De civitate Dei*:[23]

> Sed profecto Fortuna in omni re dominatur, ea res cunctas ex lubidine magis quam ex vero celebrat obscuratque. (*BeCa* 8. 1).
>
> *But no doubt Fortuna rules in every situation; all events she renders famous or conceals, more according to her caprice than according to real fact.*

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[17] T.F. Scanlon 1980, p. 44: 'Sallust's, like Thucydides's concept of 'chance' largely replaces the gods who only rate a modicum of traditional reverence'. R. Syme 1964, p. 246: 'Thucydides discarded the supernatural, and Sallust sees no moving force beyond human reason or passion, only chance.'

[18] See also *BeCa* 9.2: 'in supliciis deorum ... fideles erant'. These references come from T.F. Scanlon (1980, p. 45).

[19] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 525: 'Fickle and malicious *fortuna* was the Roman equivalent of Greek *tyche*. Consequently it may be called *fortuna/tyche*'.

[20] H. Erkell 1952, pp. 151-156. He says of one other passage (*BeCa* 58.21: 'Quod si virtuti vostrae fortuna inviderit, cavete inulti animam amittatis...') that here also *Fortuna* could be regarded as *Fortuna/Tyche*. Although he places this passage under the heading *Glück*, he comments: "Es ist jedoch nicht ausgeslschlossen, dass es sich hier auch um die *Fortuna-Tyche* handelt, denn sie wird oft als neidisch dargestellt." (p. 150).

[21] The other two mentioned by H. Erkell (1952, p. 155) are 'saepe Fortunae violentiam toleravisse' (*BeCa* 53.3), wherein Sallust mentions the same ferocious behaviour of *Fortuna* in his praise of the ancient Romans, and 'Tempus, dies, Fortuna, cuius lubido gentibus moderatur' (*BeCa* 51.25), wherein Caesar draws attention in his speech to *Fortuna*'s irrationality and controlling powers.

[22] I. Kajanto (1981, p. 536) comments on this passage: 'Of course this fortuna denotes fickle and malicious tyche.'

[23] Twice in AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* VIII. 3.

In these passages Sallust indeed seems to use the *Fortuna caeca* concept. The idea of an all-powerful, whimsical, and even malignant force controlling human events (notice how far we are removed from the benevolent *Fortuna* within traditional Roman religion!), seems incompatible with the task of an historian to find the (rational) causes of events. Most scholars agree therefore that, even though Sallust sometimes depicts *Fortuna* resembling the Hellenistic *Tyche*, he did not think of her as an active force.[24]

# 2. *SAEVIRE FORTUNA AC MISCERE OMNIA COEPIT*

## 2.1. Change in Morals Instigates a Change in *Fortuna*

The key to a right understanding of *Fortuna* in *BeCa* 10. 1 can be found in her first appearance in the monograph (*BeCa* 2. 5):

> Verum ubi pro labore desidia, pro continentia et aequitate lubido atque superbia invasere, Fortuna simul cum moribus inmutantur.[25]
>
> *But when idleness has usurped the place of industry and lawlessness and insolence have superseded self-restraint and justice, Fortuna changes with the behaviour of men.*

Also *Fortuna*'s change in behaviuor of *BeCa* 10. 1 seems to coincide with a change in morality:[26]

> Igitur primo pecuniae, deinde imperi cupido crevit; ea quasi materies omnium malorum fuere.[27]
>
> *Accordingly, at first, the lust for money, thereafter, the lust for power grew; they were, as you might say, the source of all evil.*

*Fortuna* thus started to run amok and throw everything into confusion, at a time when avarice and ambition were destroying all good behaviour. She is thus closely bound up with *mores*, but what kind of interdependence exists between *Fortuna* and *mores*? Can it be cause-effect, as T.F. Scanlon speculates?[28] The extensive passages (*BeCa* 2. 3-6 and 10. 1-6) provide, however, comparable rational explanations of the change in moral behaviour, without resorting to *Fortuna*:

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[24] H. Erkell (1952, p. 131) starts off with the question: '...ist sie dem Römer wesentlich ein literarisches Motiv, oder ist sie ihm zur Weltanschauung geworden?', and he concludes (p. 157): 'Sallust gebraucht in C [=Bellum Catilinae] einige Male unter griechischen Einfluss das Fortuna-Tyche-Motiv, aber in einer Weise, die zeigt, dass er sich nicht Fortuna als einen in der Geschichte wirksamen Faktor gedacht hat.' This is also the conclusion of G. Schweicher (1963, p. 147): 'Sallusts 'fortuna' ist kein in der Geschichte wirksamer Faktor', and R.P. Hock (1985, p. 150): 'In Sallust's thought, fortuna operates as a decisive literary principle, not as an historical agent'.

[25] H. Erkell (1952, p. 148) lists this passage under 'Schicksal = Geschehen, Lage'.

[26] G. Schweicher (1967, p. 55), too, sees a link between *BeCa* 2. 5 and 10. 1.

[27] *BeCa* 10. 3.

[28] T.F. Scanlon 1980, p. 45.

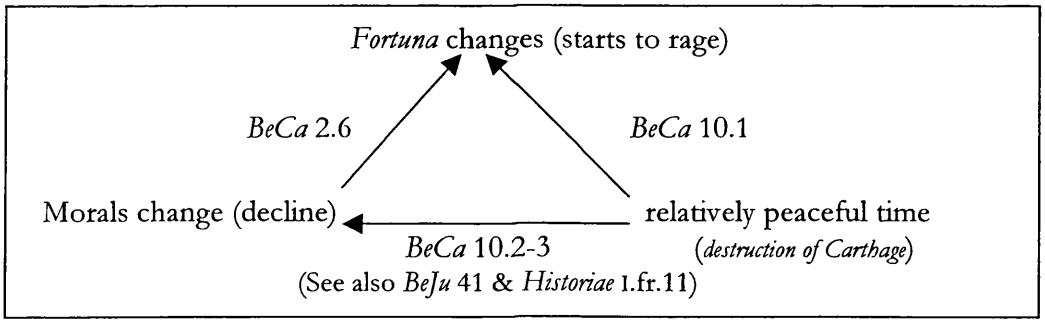
> Quodsi regum atque imperatorum animi virtus *in pace* ita ut in bello valeret, aequalibilius atque constantius sese res humanae haberent, neque aliud alio ferri neque mutari ac misceri omnia cerneres. Nam imperium facile eis artibus retinetur, quibus initio partum est.[29]
>
> *But if the virtus of the mind of kings and leaders would* in peacetime *prevail as much as in war, they themselves would preserve human affairs more equally and firmly, nor would you notice the one being carried off by the other, or see everything being changed and thrown into confusion. For power is easily being preserved by those qualities, through which it was initially obtained.*

Notice that 'mutari ac misceri omnia cerneres' is strikingly similar to 'saevire Fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit" of *BeCa* 10. 1, which provides us with another link between the two sections.[30]

Similarly, in *BeCa* 10. 2, Sallust argues that with the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC the Romans enjoyed a period of leisure that caused a moral decline:

> Qui labores, pericula, dubias atque asperas res facile toleraverant, eis otium divitiae, optanda alias, oneri miseriaeque fuere.
>
> *Leisure and wealth, desirable under other circumstances, brought trouble and wretchedness to those who easily had endured toils, dangers, and uncertain and distressing situations.*

Thus from the two expanded *Fortuna* passages (*BeCa* 2. 3-6 and 10. 1-3) one coherent line of thinking can be deduced, without needing to refer to *Fortuna*: The celebrated moral fibre of Rome is apparently difficult to maintain during peacetime. When in 146 BC, its mightiest enemy Carthage was destroyed, Rome entered a period of relative peace. This caused the moral behaviour of Romans to deteriorate, which caused internal upheaval and chaos. Passage *BeCa* 10. 1 ff. can thus be considered an application of the general principle expressed in *BeCa* 2. 3 ff.[31] The aforementioned passages form a triad of related terms:




[29] *BeCa* 2.3.

[30] H. Erkell 1952, p. 155: "Wir lesen C [=*Bellum Catilinae*] 2.3 *mutari ac miscere omnia cerneres*; wenn hier (C 10.1) gestanden hätte *omnia mutari ac misceri coepta sunt* statt *saevire fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit*, wäre es stilistisch schwächer, aber der gedankliche Zusammenhang wäre derselbe."

[31] K. Heldmann, *Sallust über die römische Weltherschaft: ein Geschichtsmodell im Catilina und seine Tradition in der hellenistischen Historiographie*, Beitrage zur Altertumskunde 34 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993), p. 109. At the end of the introduction of *BeJu* (5.2), Sallust justifies the choice of his subject, claiming that the war with king Jugurtha was 'the beginning of a struggle that played havoc with all our institutions, human and divine, (contentio divina et humana cuncta *permiscuit*) and reached a pitch of fury that civil strife was ended only by a war which left Italy a desert.' The verb 'permiscuere', unique in Sallust, is close enough to recall 'mutari ac misceri omnia' of *BeCa* 2.5 and 'saevire fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit' of 10.1. The same idea is here expressed once again: from the moment the Romans let go of *virtus* (i.e. after the destruction of Carthage), society tumbles into chaos.

Sallust's claim that *Fortuna* changes with moral behaviour (*BeCa* 2. 6) is therefore compatible with his statement that *Fortuna* started to rage after the destruction of Carthage (*BeCa* 10.1), seeing that then also Rome's moral behaviour changed (10. 2-3).

Why then does Sallust make use of *Fortuna* if the same idea apparently could be communicated without her? I think H. Erkell comes closest to the truth: 'Wenn wir sie [i.e. *Fortuna*] hinwegdenken, leidet die Darstellung nicht inhaltsmässig daran, wohl aber an Kraft.'[32] Sallust found in the *Fortuna caeca* imagery an ideal concept to express the chaos, instability and uncertainty within Roman society, caused by a change in moral behaviour for which ultimately the Romans themselves could be held responsible.[33]

More can be said about the role of *Fortuna*. The change of behaviour of *Fortuna* at the fall of Carthage has a precedent in the Greek concept of *Tyche*. Agatha Buriks, in her dissertation on Polybius' *Περὶ Τύχης*, makes a distinction between the early *Tyche* and the *Tyche* of the Hellenistic times. The early *Tyche* formed part of the traditional religion. She was subject to moral laws, and tied to *ὕβρις and νέμεσις*.[34] This 'tied' ('gebonden') *Tyche*, Agatha Buriks distinguishes from the Hellenistic 'broken away' ('losgeslagen') *Fortuna/Tyche*, who was independent of the gods and their ordinances.[35] D.C. Earl recognizes a similar duality in the use of Roman *Fortuna*:

> Towards Fortune the Romans had always had a double attitude. On the one hand, Fortune was seen as blind and capricious chance against whose machinations no man could provide and who could rob even the man of *virtus* of the just rewards of his merits... On the other hand, however, the favour of Fortune implied the favour of the gods and the man or state in which Fortune and *virtus* were joined was the most blessed and successful.[36]

Sallust seems to introduce a development in the concept of *Fortuna*, by linking two different ideas about her. He even pins down the moment that a more reliable, 'tied' *Fortuna* changes into a malevolent, erratic force:

> Sed ubi... Carthago aemula imperi Romani ab stirpe interiit... saevire Fortuna ac miscere omnia *coepit* (*BeCa* 10.1) [*Italics are mine*].

As can be implied from D.C. Earl's passage, central to the meaning of *Fortuna* stands her relation to *virtus*. According to P. McGushin, Sallust introduces

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[32] H. Erkell 1952, p. 155.
[33] R.J. Hock 1985, p. 150: 'Fortuna, for Sallust, is a neutral term (not a force) which mirrors but does not control human affairs.'
[34] C.P.T. Naudé, 'Fortuna in Ammianus Marcelllinus', *Acta Classica* 7 (1964), 70-88 (pp. 70-71), quoting (on p. 70, n.6) Agatha Buriks, *Περὶ Τύχης*, diss. (Leiden, 1948), p. 1.
[35] I am almost literally quoting C.P.T. Naudé (1964, p. 71).
[36] D.C. Earl, *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967; repr. 1970), p. 105.

> an important modification of the concept [of *Fortuna*] ... Stated briefly, his [*sc.* Sallust's] thesis is that *virtus* and *fortuna* are fused in contexts of action and activity. The stronger and wider the influence of *virtus*, the more reduced is the influence of *fortuna*.[37]

Sallust thus makes use of a double attitude towards *Fortuna*, and alleges that around 146 BC *Fortuna* started to act more in line with her whimsical reputation, abandoning her more 'conservative' role within the Roman pantheon. At first *Fortuna* was beneficently joined with *virtus*, but after the annihilation of Carthage the balance was broken due to a decline of *virtus*, and *Fortuna* started to behave adverse, by taking up the role of the Hellenistic *Tyche*, and turned into *Fortuna caeca*. Before reflecting further upon the relation between *Fortuna* and *virtus*, a closer look is needed at the crucial date for Sallust in Roman's history: the annihilation of Carthage in 146 BC.

## 2.2. *Concordia* and the *metus hostilis* factor

Throughout his three works (*BeCa* 10. 1-6, *BeJu* 41, *Hist.* I, fr. 11, 12, 16) Sallust maintains that the destruction of Carthage, and with it the removal of the *metus Punicus*, became the start of the moral crisis in Rome, which eventually would bring about the end of a free *respublica*. Sallust did not follow the well-established tradition that placed the moment of Rome's moral decline earlier in time. Livy (XXXIX. 6, 7) blames the moral deterioration on the return of Manlius Vulso's army from Asia in 187 BC, which contaminated Rome with *luxuria*, an extravagant lifestyle. Polybius (XXXI. 25, 7), being conscious of a decline in moral standards from the second century BC onwards, opted for 168 BC as the crucial date, when Rome obtained absolute supremacy in the world, after defeating Perseus in the third Macedonian war (171-168 BC).[38] The divergence in these dates is a consequence of choosing a different factor as the most decisive one in the general moral deterioration.[39] For Livy this was the damaging effect of the decadence from the east, for Polybius, one could argue, *complacency*, but for Sallust it was the rise of *discordia* through a breakdown of *virtus*.[40]

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[37] P. McGushin 1977, p. 89. He discusses the role of *Fortuna* in *Bellum Catilinae* in his comment on 10.1, no doubt, because he regards it to be a crucial passage.

[38] D.C. Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1966), pp. 42-43; W. Steidle, *Sallusts historische Monographien* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1958), p. 17; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 90; R. Syme 1964, p. 249.

[39] See also P. McGushin 1977, pp. 87-88.

[40] D.C. Earl 1961, p. 47: 'The explanation of Sallust's idealistic account of the earlier second century lies, then, in his isolation of *concordia* as the aspect of the political situation which seemed to him the most important, overconcentrating on which led him to neglect other factors which seem relevant to his treatment of his theme'.

## 2.2.1. *Concordia*

Cicero had expounded a doctrine of *concordia ordinum*, which had proved to be so successful in his dealing with Catiline,[41] an indication that the term *concordia* was of great significance within current political vocabulary. Also in *De Officiis* (I. 85), he insists on the importance of co-operation within the state: no thought of personal advantage when protecting the interest of the citizens, and the whole body-politic should be their concern, not just a section, otherwise this would introduce '*a most destructive element into the state, namely dissension and disharmony*' ('seditio et discordia').

In *BeJu* 10. 6 we see the great impact of *concordia* as well as the disastrous consequences of *discordia* articulated for a society: 'concordia parvae res crescunt, discordia maxumae dilabuntur.' ('*Small things grow as a result of concord, but the greatest things will waste away due to discord*'). In *BeCa* (9. 1-2) Sallust describes the prosperous condition of the *respublica* before 146 BC as 'concordia maxuma, minuma avaritia erat [...] iurgia, discordias, simultates cum hostibus exercebant' ('*There was the greatest concord, and hardly any greed [...] quarrels, dissensions, and enmities they practised with their (foreign) enemies*').[42]

*Concordia* is thus characteristic of Rome before the destruction of Carthage. However, Sallust adjusts this too optimistic picture of *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Jugurthinum* in his last work, *Historiae*.[43] For instance in I. fr.11, he accepts the existence of civil *discordia* even before 146 BC, but maintains that from the second Punic war on (i.e. 202 BC) until 146 BC, the greatest unity reigned. Later, Augustine will pick up this inconsistency in Sallust's works, comparing his idealised interpretation of the period after the expulsion of the kings in *Bellum Catilinae* (9. 1: 'ius bonumque apud eos non legibus magis quam natura valebat'; '*right and fair dealing prevailed among them by nature as much as by law*'), with the quarrels that arose among the citizens in that same period as recounted in *Historiae* (I. fr.11).[44]

Also in the foundation story of the Roman people recorded in *BeCa* (6. 2), *concordia* plays a central role: 'incredibile memoratu est quam facile coaluerint: brevi multitudo dispersa atque vaga concordia civitas facta erat' ('*It is beyond belief telling how easily they united, and so, in a short time, a heterogeneous and wandering mob was welded into a cohesive state*').

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[41] D. Stockton, *Cicero: A Political Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 143; see also his speech to the populace *In Catilinam* IV, 14-24, wherein *concordia ordinum* forms the main theme; *Concordia* had become an important political slogan in the Late Republican period. Th. Wiedermann ('Sallust's Jugurtha. Concord, Discord, and the Digressions', *Greece & Rome* 40 (1993), 48-57), argues that, at least in the *BeJu*, concord and co-operation is the central theme of the narrative.

[42] P. McGushin 1977, p. 82: '*Concordia* is the leading concept chosen by Sallust to characterise the period of greatness, just as *avaritia* becomes the leading concept of his picture of the decline.'

[43] P. Mc Gushin 1977, p. 84; D.C. Earl 1961, p. 41.

[44] F. Klingner 1928, p. 165; AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* II. 18. Sallust ignored in *Belum Catilinae* (and *Bellum Jugurthinum*) for instance the early quarrels between *patres* and *plebs*, something he will adjust in *Historiae*.

## 2.2.2. *Metus hostilis*

The well-known theory of *metus hostilis*[45] ('fear of a foreign enemy') becomes an important factor when one stresses the importance of *concordia* within society. Philosophers such as Plato (*Laws* III 698b)[46] and Posidonius (*Diod.* XXXIV. 33.4-6) had already articulated what a beneficial effect fear of an (external) enemy could have on internal *concordia*. According to D.C. Earl and R. Syme, Sallust more likely adopted this philosophical idea from a famous debate, in which Scipio Nasica applied this theory to Carthage (*metus Punicus*), urging the Senate to keep Carthage as a continual menace, in order to promote Roman discipline and internal unity, while Cato the elder insisted on its total annihilation.[47] The destruction of Carthage removed for good the *metus Punicus*, so that *concordia* collapsed among the Romans under the pressure of *ambitio* (*imperi cupido*) and *avaritia* (*pecuniae cupido*).[48] D.C. Earl summarises this process as follows:

> It was *concordia* which was destroyed by the rise of partes and factiones after the destruction of Carthage, when men, basing their actions, not on *virtus*, but on *lubido* expressed as *ambitio* and *avaritia*, tore the *respublica* asunder in pursuit of their selfish ends.[49]

In the eyes of Sallust, the threat of the enemy had helped in the past to preserve the moral fibre of society: 'metus hostilis in bonis artibus civitatem retinebat'.[50] Once this factor was removed, latent unresolved frictions between groups could come to the fore again.[51] The relative safety and prosperity of the *respublica* gave individuals the opportunity to think of their own interests, even if it would go against the well-being of the *respublica*.[52]

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[45] See H. Fuchs, 'Der Friede als Gefahr', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1985), 363-385.

[46] '*The enormous size of the [Persian] army that was coming at us [= Athenians] by land and sea made us desperately afraid, and served to increase our obedience to the authorities and the law. For all these reasons we displayed a tremendous spirit of co-operation.*' Notice that Cicero's success in creating a *concordia ordinum* in 63 BC was also mainly due to Catiline's revolutionary plans which endangered the established order of society.

[47] D. C. Earl 1961, pp. 47-49; R. Syme 1964, pp. 249-250. For the historicity of this debate, see, for instance, PLUTARCH, *Cato Maior* 27 and APPIAN, *Lib.* 69. It is tempting to see in this debate the inspiration for Sallust to give the dispute between Julius Caesar and Cato the younger, the grandson of Cato the elder (!), such a prominent place within his monograph. Cato expresses a similar severity towards the fate of the conspirators as his grandfather had done towards the future of Carthage, while Julius Caesar defends a more lenient solution, not unlike Scipio Nasica. Caesar, however, does this not in order to preserve unity through *metus hostilis*. He tries to prevent future men in power from misusing a pronounced sentence of death on Roman citizens as a legal precedent to eliminate personal enemies.

[48] SALLUST, *BeCa* 10.3: 'igitur primo pecuniae, deinde imperi cupido crevit'.

[49] D.C. Earl 1961, p.45.

[50] *BeJu* 41.

[51] In the digressions of *BeJu* Sallust devotes more attention to the *factiones* and their strife to power (for instance, *BeJu* 41-42). The tensions between the *factiones* is exemplified by characters such as Metullus, and Marius in the narrative itself, while also the digressions deal with the theme of *concordia* and *discordia*. (See T. Wiedermann 1993, 48-57).

[52] D.J. Stewart 1968, pp. 302-303: 'With security there came a new opportunity to exploit politics for personal profit and vanity'.

## 2.3. Growing Confusion and Uncertainty after 146 BC

Why would Sallust describe the moral changes within Roman society in 146 BC as 'saevire Fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit' (*BeCa* 10. 1), thereby recalling 'mutari ac miscere omnia cerneres' of *BeCa* 2. 3? P. McGushin thinks that 'miscere omnia' 'became almost a technical term for revolution'.[53] Usually it is translated '*to throw everything into confusion*', but maybe the standard meaning of 'miscere', '*to mix, mingle*' might bring us closer to what Sallust exactly tried to convey with this expression. Before Carthage's destruction the Romans 'iurgia, discordias, simultates cum hostibus exercebant' ('*practised quarrels, dissensions, and enmities with their (foreign) enemies*').[54] After 146 BC this changed. *Hostis* no longer stood simply for a 'foreign enemy'. The term could now also refer to a Roman citizen who was considered to be a threat to the respublica, a 'public enemy'. This mingling of concepts, caused by internal *discordia*, is a dominant theme throughout *Bellum Catilinae.*

### 2.3.1. The Conspirators: Roman Citizens or Public Enemies

The debate between Caesar and Cato about the fate of the captured conspirators at Rome, can essentially be brought back to the question whether they should be treated as Roman citizens (Caesar's position),[55] - so that they were, for instance, allowed to appeal to the tribunes - or as public enemies (Cato's viewpoint).[56] The two differing interpretations hinge their argument on the same *mos maiorum.* The reader does not receive any help from the author to evaluate each claim. An absolute framework to think correctly about right and wrong is not made available, so that it becomes difficult to weigh the arguments both sides make. The way in which Sallust describes the final verdict of the Senate does not make any clearer whether justice had triumphed or not, and he withholds his own judgement on the matter.[57]

### 2.3.2. The Synkrisis of Cato and Caesar

A similar problem arises with the famous *synkrisis* of Cato and Caesar after their speeches (*BeCa* 53. 6 - 54. 6).[58] Sallust's ingenious way of presenting a comparison between the two

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[53] P. McGushin 1977, p. 89.
[54] *BeCa* 9. 2.
[55] Thus far they had not yet committed any crime.
[56] P. McGushin 1977, p. 249.
[57] *BeCa* 53. 1: 'Cato clarus atque magnus habetur; senati decretum fit, sicuti ille censuerat.' '*Cato was now regarded as a great and illustrious citizen, and a decree of the Senate was passed, just as he had proposed.*'
[58] I am indebted for most of this analysis to W.W. Batstone, 'The Antithesis of Virtue: Sallust's *Synkrisis* and the Crisis of the Late Republic', *Classical Antiquity* 7 (1988), 1-29.

characters leaves the reader confused about the meaning of the words he employs. At stake here is the meaning of *virtus* itself, since Sallust manages to throw doubt upon almost every moral quality he attributes to the two protagonists. At first sight it seems clear what Sallust has to say about Caesar: 'Caesar beneficiis ac munificentia magnus habebatur...' (*'Caesar was held in high regard because of his services and generosity...'*) There is no doubt that 'beneficium' ('service') and 'munificentia' ('generosity') are honourable qualities. However, Sallust continues this sentence with '...integritate vitae Cato' (*'...Cato on account of his uprightness in life'*). The juxtaposition of Caesar's qualities with Cato's 'integritas vitae' throws doubt upon the merits of both characters: How far is Caesar's proclaimed generosity removed from bribery, and Cato's integrity from stinginess? These suspicions are further confirmed by following antithesis (*BeCa* 54. 3): 'Caesar dando, sublevando, ignoscundo, Cato nihil largiundo gloriam adeptus est' (*'Caesar gained renown by giving, lending someone a hand, and pardoning, Cato by never granting presents'*). The reader himself has to make up his mind whether Sallust is actually accusing Caesar of corruption, and Cato of meanness. That these terms have an uncertain meaning is accentuated by Cato's observation (who seems to resemble the opinion of Sallust himself in this): 'inter bonos et malos discrimen nullum' (*BeCa* 52. 22), [59] and above all his view that

> Iam pridem equidem nos vera vocabula rerum amisimus: quia bona aliena largiri liberalitas, malarum rerum audacia fortitudo vocatur, eo res publica in extremo sita est.[60]
>
> *Long ago we have indeed lost the true words for reality, because to squander other people's property is called generosity, and boldness in criminal businesses goes by the name of courage. That is why the state is at its last gasp.*

Sallust himself acknowledged the bankruptcy of political vocabulary (for instance in *BeCa* 12. 1, and *BeCa* 38. 3), and P. McGushin sees this as a constant theme running throughout this monograph.[61] It goes hand in hand with the deceit that grew within Roman society after 146 BC:

> Ambitio multos mortalis falsos fieri subegit, aliud clausum in pectore aliud in lingua promptum habere. [...] magisque voltum quam ingenium bonum habere.[62]
>
> *Ambition encouraged many men to become deceitful, to shut up one thought in their heart, while having another ready on their tongue. [...] to have more the appearance than the nature of moral goodness.*

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[59] Others have expressed a similar sentiment: Catullus (64. 404: 'omnia fanda nefanda malo permixta furore'), which comes close to Sallust's 'saevire Fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit'. Virgil, too, deplores the moral turmoil within Roman society in *Georgics* (1. 505: 'quippe ubi fas versum atque nefas').

[60] *BeCa* 52.11.

[61] P. McGushin 1977, p. 261.

[62] *BeCa* 10. 5.

## 2.4. Loss of '*fides*', Corner-Stone of Roman Society

This deception of language is a sign of the loss of a moral quality most highly esteemed by the Romans: *fides* ('trust, reliability'). D.C. Earl writes about this virtue:

> *Fides*, of course, was not only the corner-stone of the *patronus-cliens* relationship, but also the quality which ensured the stability of *amicitia* between equals, the political alliance of individuals and families on which Roman public life in the first century BC was founded. As such, its importance to a Roman was paramount and it is hardly surprising to read that before the advent of corruption the Romans 'in amicos fideles erant'.[63]

The Romans considered 'perfidia', the breaking of an oath, to be a terrible offence, and it was one of the few areas in which Roman religion directly tried to influence moral behaviour: 'In every oath a god was called in to punish the oath-breaker'.[64] The fact that the Romans after 146 BC began 'deos negligere' (*'to neglect the gods'*)[65] meant also that one of the restraints to keep one's word lost its effect.[66]

Notice that in both *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Jugurthinum* Rome's victory depended largely on 'betrayal'. Cicero induced the Gallic envoys to double cross the conspirators, by asking them to feign great interest in Catiline's conspiracy, to try to get their hands on the clearest possible evidence against it (*BeCa* 41. 5). In *Bellum Jugurthinum* (111) Bocchus, king of the Moors, is persuaded by Sulla to betray his ally Jugurtha *'in contravention of all recognized moral principles (kingship, marriage, and a formal treaty)'*.[67] Although Rome could secure more easily its victory via these betrayals, this kind of behaviour would never have been tolerated a century earlier.[68] Inevitably, *fides* thereby lost some of its traditional value in Roman society itself. The two instances show that tolerating perfidious behaviour as a means of defeating an external enemy (Jugurtha) easily leads to using it to overcome internal enemies within

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[63] D.C. Earl 1961, p. 11; so also J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, pp. 175-176: 'The virtue of *Fides* had always been held in very high esteem at Rome. Indeed it was, in a sense, the keystone of Roman morality'. The fact that Virgil's 'pious' Aeneas, the most renowned ancestor of Octavian (if not a kind of 'representation' of him in the Heroic age), was accused by Dido of perfidy (*Aeneid* IV.305 & 366), is at odds with Virgil's often presumed propagandistic purpose behind the *Aeneid*. In his last chapter, M. Ridley (1997, pp. 249-265) discusses the importance of trust for a successful and strong society.

[64] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, pp. 41-42 n.6. The importance of *fides* can also be deduced from the fact that the Romans set great store by the story of Regulus, one of Rome's most celebrated heroes. Although he could have saved his life by breaking the oath he had made with the Carthaginians, Regulus nevertheless decided to return to his foe where he died a cruel death (by way of sleep-deprivation). The story is told, for instance, in CICERO, *De officiis* I. 39; Augustine (*De civ. Dei* I. 24) will say of Regulus: 'Inter omnes suos laudabiles et virtutum insignibus illustres viros non proferunt Romam meliorem' (*'Among all their heroes, men worthy of honour and renowned for virtus, the Romans have none greater to produce'*).

[65] *BeCa* 10.4.

[66] CICERO, *De officiis* III. 102: 'Quid est igitur, dixerit quis, in iure iurando? num iratum timemus Iovem?' (*'Someone will say: "So what point is there in swearing an oath? We surely do not fear the wrath of Jupiter?"'*).

[67] T. Wiedermann 1993, p. 48.

[68] R.J. Goar 1972, p. 32: 'Gone were the days when the senate rejected treachery as a means of combating a foe as dangerous as Pyrrhus, and when Regulus kept his oath to the Carthaginians, even at the cost of his life.' For the story on Pyrrhus, see CICERO, *De officiis* I.40: the senate handed over to Pyrrhus a deserter, who had offered them to kill his own king Pyrrhus by administering poison to him.

society (Catilinarian conspirators). It is only a small step to try to eliminate one's personal political enemies or rivals with these immoral means ('malae artes').

Sallust pictured Rome after 146 BC as a society marked by dissent, corruption and deceit, wherein people put their own interests before that of the common good. The degree of disintegration was such that even the political vocabulary had lost its true meaning, so that uncertainty, disorder and unpredictability prevailed.

In his introduction of *BeCa* (3.2) Sallust describes in a 'Thucydidean' way the duty of a historian as 'facta dictis exaequanda sunt' (*'deeds are to be equalled with words'*). This seems impossible when a historian is writing at a time when words have lost their true meaning. C.S. Kraus, however, offers a clue how to understand Sallust's attempt to meet this demand: 'A crabbed, difficult, elliptical style [...] can create a linguistic atmosphere imitating the contradictions and hypocrisies in the "real" world'.[69] It is therefore Sallust's groundbreaking style that enabled him to mirror the distorted society of Rome. Via a deceptive, unbalanced use of language, he managed in an unusual, but sublime, way "*exaequare facta dictis*". This accomplishment is particularly manifest in the *synkrisis*. W. W. Batstone comments:

> He reveals for the reader, in part through the reader's own suspicions, the cynicism and the conflict of forces which thwarted both virtue itself and the understanding and evaluation of apparent virtue [...] His [Sallust's] deceptive text is an analogue of how he was himself deceived, so he says, by politics, and his own loss of innocence.[70]

There was no longer available an absolute way to assess someone's character: everything had become "mixed up".

Sallust's choice of *Fortuna* as literary device makes therefore sense when we understand *Fortuna* as 'the personification of chance, the unpredictable, the unforeseen, and therefore the uncontrollable'. When he says that '*Fortuna began to act violently and throw everything into confusion*' (*BeCa* 10.1), it means that the once well-ordered, stable Roman society, in which the majority stuck to the rules and behaved as could be expected of them, started to become disarrayed from 146 BC on. Its behaviour became far more arbitrary and uncontrollable, because people themselves acted more unpredictably, trespassing the customary rules of conduct, disdaining the highly valued *fides*. Sallust reveals a moral dimension in *Fortuna*'s behaviour, an aspect which would be less obvious when she is perceived as pure chance. The logic behind it is simple: the more members of society abandon the established way of behaviour of serving the common good (i.e. stop exercising their *virtus*), the more their behaviour becomes unpredictable and uncontrollable.

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[69] C.S. Kraus 1997, p. 12.
[70] W. W. Batstone 1988, p. 29. Concerning Sallust's own experience see *BeCa* 3.3-4.2.

Consequently, more unexpected, inexplicable, and unjust events will occur, which cannot be explained within the traditional frame, because people have started acting outside it. Bribery is a good example of the disorder that can be caused by immoral behaviour: it is a secret deal that influences the outcome, which leads to an unfair, and unexpected result. Sallust presents contemporary Rome as a society wherein there seems to have been no certainties in life any more, to which people could hold on. Even religion was embroiled into the party strife, each group manipulating it to their own advantage.[71] In short, the ideology of the *respublica* was being misused and thereby ruined by *factiones* in order to enhance their own position, while, as Cicero pointed out, good leadership involved serving all the citizens, i.e. the whole *respublica*.[72] Precisely because of this *discordia* the society disintegrated, without any solution at hand within the system to stop its fall.

In Cato's speech[73] a link might be found between the Roman gods, *Fortuna* and moral fibre:

> Sed inertia et mollitia animi alius alium exspectantes cunctamini, videlicet dis inmortalibus confisi, qui hanc rem publicam saepe in maxumis periculis servavere. Non votis neque suppliciis muliebribus auxilia deorum parantur: vigilando, agundo, bene consulundo prospere omnia cedunt. Ubi socordiae te atque ignaviae tradideris, nequiquam deos implores: irati infestique sunt.[74]
>
> *But you are so indolent and weak that you stand irresolute, each waiting for someone else to act – trusting, doubtless, to the gods, who have often preserved this respublica in enormous dangers. Vows and womanish supplications will not secure divine aid: it is by alertness, action and wise counsel that everything turns out successfully. If you give way to idleness and cowardice, you will in vain appeal to the gods: they are angry and hostile.*

There are some similarities here with the idea of *Fortuna*. She, too, became angry when the morals changed among the Roman citizens. Cato condemns the reaction of many who are offering prayers to the gods, instead of taking action.[75] In the introduction of *Bellum Jugurthinum* Sallust writes:

> Falso queritur de natura sua genus humanorum, quod imbecilla atque aevi brevis forte potius quam virtute regatur. [...] Qui ubi ad gloriam virtutis via grassatur, abunde pollens potensque et clarus est neque Fortuna eget, quippe quae probitatem, industriam aliasque artis bonas neque dare neque eripere cuiquam potest. Sin captus pravis cupidinibus ad inertiam et voluptates corporis pessum datus est, perniciosa libidine

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[71] R.J. Goar 1972, p. 29: 'The bitter struggle between the parties, in which religion was often used openly as a weapon by both sides.'

[72] For the manipulation of, for instance, the interpretation of portents, see J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 57, citing DIO XLI.14, 6; CICERO, *De officiis* I.85.

[73] Cato even seems to have used the terms 'gods' and 'chance' interchangeably at times (CICERO, *Ad familiares* XV.5, 2, cited by J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 32).

[74] *BeCa* 52. 28-29.

[75] Sallust described the reaction of the women in Rome at the news of a possible war against the revolutionaries of Catiline in similar terms: 'ad hoc mulieres, quibus rei publicae magnitudine belli timor insolitus incesserat, adflictare sese, manus supplices ad caelum tendere' (*BeCa* 31.3) '*Moreover, the women, to whom, - owing to the greatness of the respublica -, the fear for war had come as a new experience, were in great distress, and they stretched their hands to the sky as suppliants*').

> paulisper usus, ubi per socordiam vires tempus ingenium diffluxere, naturae infirmitas accusatur: suam quisque culpam auctores ad negotia transferunt. Quod si hominibus bonarum rerum tanta cura esset, quanto studio aliena nihil profutura multaque etiam periculosa petunt, neque regerentur magis quam regerent casus...
>
> *Mankind complains wrongly that their nature is feeble and short-lived, and ruled rather by chance (forte) than by virtus. [...] When it [= the soul] proceeds on the virtuous road to glory, it has all the resources and abilities and does not need Fortuna, since she of course cannot give any man uprightness, energy, and other good qualities, nor snatch them away. But if the soul is enslaved by base desires and sinks into corruption of sloth and carnal pleasures, it enjoys a ruinous indulgence for a short time; then when strength, time, and intelligence wasted away through laziness, the blame is put on the weakness of our nature, and each men excuses himself for his own shortcomings by imputing his failure to adverse circumstances (negotia). But if men pursued good things with the same ardour with which they seek what is unedifying and unprofitable – often, indeed, actually dangerous and pernicious – they would not rather be governed by chance (casus) than control chance.*

Just as the Romans through weakness of themselves sought the help of the gods, so do they blame their shortcomings to *Fortuna.*

According to Cato, praying to the gods is to no avail: only a return to the ancient Roman *virtus* will save the *respublica.* The help of the gods is to a certain extent only passively linked with the moral fibre of the Romans.[76] Cato seems to suggest that the gods will favour the Romans when they act virtuously, and turn against them when they give themselves over to debauchery. In this sense, also *Fortuna* seems only to mirror the moral condition of Rome: when this is high, *Fortuna* is prosperous; when this is low, *Fortuna* turns violent. This seems to confirm T.F. Scanlon's view that *Fortuna* replaces the role of the gods in Sallust's work.

Sallust's view that 146 BC was a decisive turning-point, however crude this simplification might seem, can thus be vindicated as follows: firstly, with the destruction of Carthage disappeared the beneficial effects of *metus hostilis.* If we accept Livy's account of the introduction of Roman religion by king Numa in the early years of Rome, then also the fact that the Romans started to neglect the gods after 146 BC, accounts for the deterioration of the moral fibre of Roman society. Livy (*Ab urbe condita* I.19, 15) regarded the introduction of religion as a way to substitute fear of the gods ('metus deorum') for fear of an external enemy ('metus hostilium') during peacetime. This anachronistic look upon Roman religion, - it says more about how the Romans of Livy's lifetime saw the role of religion - contains a kernel of truth: Roman religion, in its meticulous performance of many elaborate rituals,

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[76] Cicero wanted to bring the two closer together: those who do great deeds in the service of the state have a divine aspect. According to Cicero the temple to Virtus in Rome served as a reminder to all who possessed *virtus* that a part of the divine was within them. (Penelope D. Johnson 1975, p. 119, using CICERO, *De republica* II. 10 and II. 25, and *De legibus* II. 8.) Notice that this idea comes close to what M. Ridley (1997, p. 146) says: 'The virtues of tolerance, compassion and justice are not policies towards which we strive, knowing the difficulties upon the way, but commitments we make and expect others to make – gods we pursue'.

instilled in the Romans a routine of restraint and obedience, which must have had a beneficial effect on their overall conduct in society.[77]

The fact that every public action or political decision involved a religious ceremony, and that public life was based on the religious calendar, illustrates the dominating presence of religion in Roman life. Further, Rome had become in 146 BC a world power, with no one else to fear ('cuncta maria terraeque patebant' *BeCa* 10. 1). The safety, the growing feelings of superiority and self-confidence contributed to a slackening of the tight reins of discipline, and a general loss of self-restraint. Individuals could afford to indulge in the luxury of pursuing their own interests, even when they ran counter to the public interest.

The citizens' commitment and investment in the common good had been essential for Rome in the past to survive, and to reach a position of sovereignty. Once this aim was achieved the urgency to do one's 'duty' towards the community fell away. The state seemed great and strong enough now to sustain people's capitalization on its position:

> Sed postquam luxu atque desidia civitas conrupta est, rursus res publica magnitudine sua imperatorum atque magistratuum vitia sustentabat.[78]
>
> *But in a later period, when the city was corrupted by luxury and idleness, conversely, the state supported the vices of its generals and magistrates by its greatness.*

Sallust saw the self-controlled, dutiful citizen of the early *respublica* become after 146 BC a self-indulgent, parasitic citizen of a powerful Rome, who, when politically committed, cared more for himself and his *factio*, than for the *respublica* as a whole.

# 3. *VIRTUS* AND *FORTUNA*

## 3.1. The Rise of Rome to a World Power

Many historians gave their opinion on the complex issue of what caused the "miraculous" growth and preservation of Rome. Cicero thought that Rome's power was established by military and political *virtus*, but the Greeks usually claimed that Rome's supremacy was purely a gift of *Fortuna*.[79] It could be expected that the culturally superior Greeks, who were conquered by the uncouth Romans, would blame *Fortuna/Tyche* for this "anomaly" in

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[77] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (1979, p. 6) compares this beneficial result with the 'decisive psychological effect' military drill and the performance of many insignificant tasks has in a modern army.

[78] *BeCa* 53.5. Cato remarks (*BeCa* 52. 9): 'tamen res publica firma erat, opulentia neglegentiam tolerabat' (*'Nevertheless, the respublica remained stable: thanks to its abundant resources, it could endure the carelessness (of its subjects)'*).

[79] I. Kajanto 1981, pp. 534-535; See also C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine*, rev. edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944; repr. New York: Galaxy Books, 1961), p. 99.

history.[80] Polybius attempted to correct the picture Greeks had about Rome, by offering other reasons for Rome's greatness than mere chance.[81] A century later, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, too, wrote that many Greeks still thought it was *tyche* (chance), not *virtus* that could explain the success of such worthless barbarians (the Romans).[82] Plutarch (*c.* AD 46 – after 120) considered in his essay *On Fortuna of the Romans* whether *virtus* or *Fortuna* was ultimately responsible for the establishment and increase of Roman power. Only the part wherein the claims of *Fortuna* are presented has been preserved.[83]

The *virtus* - *Fortuna* opposition not only played a key role within Stoic thought,[84] it also formed part of the standard explanation of Rome's rise to a world power. The historian Florus (first half of the second century AD) makes use of the antithesis *virtus-Fortuna* to explain the ultimate causes of Rome's success:

> Tot in laboribus periculisque [populus Romanus] iactatus est, ut ad constituendum eius imperium contendisse virtus et Fortuna videantur.[85]
>
> *The Roman people were thrown into so many hardships and dangers, that, in order to establish their empire, virtus and Fortuna seem to have vied with each other.*

Florus' overall idea that Rome became powerful as a result of the outstanding *virtus* of its citizens, but that Rome became old and declined through lack of *virtus*, and the all-controlling behaviour of *Fortuna*,[86] tallies with Sallust's reflection on Roman history.

Sallust perceived a correlation between *virtus* and *Fortuna*: 'The stronger and wider the influence of *virtus*, the more reduced is the influence of *Fortuna*'.[87] Rome could become a dominant world power, because *virtus* thrived within Roman society, generating sufficient resilience to meet the (usually external) challenges of *Fortuna*.

Sallust relates that in the old days, the excellent *virtus* of a few citizens had enabled poor men to conquer rich, and a handful of men to subdue a multitude:

> Cognoveram parvis copiis bella gesta cum opulentis regibus, ad hoc saepe Fortunae violentiam toleravisse.[88]

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[80] Eva Matthews Sanford's article 'Contrasting Views of the Roman Empire' (*American Journal of Philology* 58 (1937), 437-456) deals with the different views the Romans and the Easterners had on Rome's supremacy.

[81] POLYBIUS, I. 63, 9: *'These facts [sc. the outcome of the first Punic war] confirm the proposition which I put forward at the beginning of my history, namely that the supremacy of the Romans did not come about, as certain Greek writers have supposed, either by chance or without the victors knowing what they were doing.'*

[82] DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS, I, 4.2

[83] Eva M. Sanford 1937, pp. 451-452.

[84] On this, see the chapter on the Stoic Order (III. 1) of this thesis.

[85] FLORUS, *Praefatio* 2, cited from J. Scholtemeijer, 'Lucius Annaeus Florus, 'n Analise van strukturele temas: 'n nuwe perspektief', *Acta Classica* 17 (1974), 81-100, p. 84; See also I. Kajanto 1981, pp. 546-548, for a discussion of *Fortuna* in Florus' works. Also Ammianus Marcellinus (*Historiae* XIV.6, 3-6) will claim that through rivalry of both *virtus* and *Fortuna*, Rome had become a world power. (See section 2.3.5.)

[86] J. Scholtemeijer 1974, p. 84.

[87] P. McGushin 1977, p. 89.

[88] *BeCa* 53.3; moreover, the historian Polybius (c. 201 – 120 BC) devotes considerable attention to the Roman constitution, because he has found 'no greater or more violent changes of *Fortuna* in our time than those

*I had become aware that with scanty resources wars had been waged against wealthy kings, and that, moreover, they endured the ferocity of Fortuna.*

Rome's continuous struggle for survival against its more powerful neighbours encouraged self-sacrificial behaviour of its subjects to secure the survival of the whole society. Consequently, Rome's traditional ideology and its own interpretation of what *virtus* stood for, were very much built around this survival struggle. To a certain extent, the vicissitudes of *Fortuna* (read: the uncontrollable external threat) helped to create the kind of *virtus* Rome would become renowned for. In the early stages Roman *virtus* meant above all 'military prowess'. Being surrounded by powerful enemies, its only chance for survival was to organize society and its ideology in such a way that it could produce the greatest military ability with its limited resources. It involved the greatest bravery, discipline, insight in tactics, and internal unity.

Some general reflections on the notion of virtue can help us further in analysing the particular concept of *virtus Romana*. The findings of biologist M. Ridley prove to be helpful. He states: 'We define virtue almost exclusively as pro-social, and vice as anti-social behaviour'.[89] He later reiterates this as follows: 'Selfishness is almost the definition of vice... in contrast, virtue is almost by definition, the greater good of the group'.[90] *Virtue* can be looked upon as how we want other members of our society to behave. Rome's survival depended largely on its capacity to make its citizens forfeit their short-term individual gain for the profit they were likely to reap in the long-term, when they exercised their *virtus* in service of the community. The keystone of Rome's success depended on its ability to instil the particularly demanding *virtus Romana* into its citizens.

## 3.2. The Promotion of Virtuous Behaviour

### 3.2.1. A GREAT REWARD: *HONORES* AND WORLDLY *GLORIA*

*Virtus* - related to 'vir' ('*man*'), although maybe not etymologically derived from it -[91] became the promoted behaviour within Roman society via several measures, which benefited the common good. One of the main incentives of virtuous behaviour was the reward of *honores* and *gloria*. Thirst for glory, (*cupido gloriae*), was, according to Sallust, the main spur for men to

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which befell the Romans'. (POLYBIUS, *Historiae* VI.2; transl.: I. Scott-Kilvert 1979, p. 302.) See also I. Kajanto (1981, p. 536): 'Sallust's idea in *Cat.* 53,3 is that the *virtus* of the ancient Romans proved superior to *fortuna* which, so far from favouring them, often caused great setbacks'.

[89] M. Ridley 1996, p. 6.

[90] M. Ridley 1996, p. 38.

[91] Penelope D. Johnson 1975, p. 117, n. 1.

act bravely in service of the common good.[92] The transition from a kingdom to a *respublica* offered more opportunities and a considerable reward for men to excel in *virtus*: real political power, with the chance of winning *gloria*.[93] Sallust remarks that kings are distrustful of virtuous men, because they fear for their position.

The idea that Rome's institutions contributed towards fostering a spirit of bravery in their young men is discussed in more detail by Polybius (*c.*202 – 120 BC).[94] He gives two fundamental elements for the preservation of a state: '*bravery in the face of the enemy, and concord among its citizens*'.[95] Both pillars were greatly looked after in Roman society.

### 3.2.2. PROPAGANDA OF VIRTUOUS BEHAVIOUR

The ceremony of the burial of an eminent citizen offered an opportunity to implant in young men the ambition to act virtuously. On such occasion, the great heroic exploits of the deceased were recounted before the whole of the populace, and eminent ancestors were 'revived' during the burial procession by carrying their masks.[96] '*It would be hard to imagine a more impressive scene for a young man who aspires to win fame and to practise virtus*', Polybius remarks.[97] Sallust, too, recounts that illustrious citizens such as Publius Scipio used to say that the sight of their ancestors' portrait-masks fired their hearts with an ardent desire to merit honour.[98] The heroic deeds of all the famous ancestors of the family were also recalled during the ceremony, so that they, too, could serve as models and '*inspire young men to endure extremes of suffering for the common good in the hope of winning the glory that awaits the brave*'.[99]

## 3.3. The Role of Religion

Other aspects of Roman society helped to preserve unity. Two of them have already been discussed: the *metus hostilis* factor and religion ('*metus deorum*'). Polybius singles out religious belief as the most decisive factor in Rome's superiority. A religion demanding the

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[92] *BeCa* 7. 3: 'tanta cupido gloriae incesserat'; 7. 6: 'sed gloriae maxumum certamen inter ipsos erat... gloriam ingentem, divitias honestas volebant.' Virgil (*Georgics* IV.205) ascribes a similar attitude to the bees, whom he calls also 'parvi Quirites' ('*little Romans*'): 'tantus amor florum et generandi gloria mellis' ('*such is their love for flowers and their glory in producing honey*'.

[93] *BeCa* 6. 7-7. 7; during the imperial period there will be indeed numerous occasions where emperors eliminate strong, virtuous men, because they see them as rivals for their "throne".

[94] POLYBIUS *Historiae* VI. 52.

[95] POLYBIUS, *Historiae* VI. 46.

[96] This seems to me the closest thing a Roman could get to live a life after death. Undoubtedly, the idea that one would be remembered for ever after one's death in such a magnificent way must have had a considerable influence on the spectators.

[97] POLYBIUS, *Historiae* VI. 53.

[98] *BeJu* 4. 5: 'Nam saepe ego audivi Q. Maximum, P. Scipionem, praeterea civitatis nostrae praeclaros viros solitos ita dicere, cum maiorum imagines intuerentur, vehementissime sibi animum ad virtutem accendi'.

[99] POLYBIUS, *Historiae* VI. 54.

meticulous performance of its rites (*δεισιδαιμονία*), which elsewhere had been strongly disapproved of, guaranteed the cohesion of the Roman state.[100] It helped to restrain the common people from '*unreasoning anger and violent passions*', and he mentions specifically the beneficent influence of a belief in the punishments of Hades.[101] Coincidence or not, Sallust makes this belief an issue of debate between Caesar and Cato. Caesar endorses the Epicurean doctrine in pointing out that after death there is no reward, nor punishment.[102] Cato clearly favours the Platonic doctrine, which shared with the commoners' belief that good and bad are treated differently in the afterlife.[103]

Roman religion assisted Rome's success by boosting the morale when reassurance was mostly needed. Livy (XXI. 9-10) recounts that after a terrible defeat against Hannibal (at Lake Trasimene), many religious rituals were performed where the whole populace could join in. In this way something was being done to ease the tension among the populace, and to prevent further disaster.[104] Desperation, panic and chaos, which could easily lead to the collapse of the existing order and surrender, were thereby averted, and the populace was inspired by a renewed confidence in a successful outcome for Rome.

This is why the pagans raised their voice after the sack of Rome in AD 410 to restore the traditional Roman religion: it had been the accustomed remedy to banish the panic and despair of the populace. Augustine's polemical work *De civitate Dei* can therefore also be seen as an attempt to reassure his own flock that the sack of Rome is also part of God's providential plan, and that therefore Christians need not be afraid of the future and panic, because even this disaster does not affect their ultimate reward: eternal life.

## 3.4. A Change in *Fortuna* instigates a change in .... *virtus*

### (Sallust's Ideal of *virtus animi*)[105]

Several factors after 146 BC discouraged the exercise of virtuous behaviour in public life. Sallust gives several reasons in *Bellum Jugurthinum* (3) why the traditional domain of *virtus* has become far less interesting in his lifetime:

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[100] G.J.D. Aalders, 'Polybius en de goden', *Lampas* 20 (1987), 119-130 (p. 119).

[101] POLYBIUS, *Historiae* VI. 56. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (1977, p. 15) adjusts this picture and points out that when it comes to, for instance, public divination, it was used as much by the Senate to exercise control over individual nobles.

[102] SALLUST, *BeCa* 51. 20: 'in luctu atque miseriis mortem aerumnarum requiem non cruciateum esse, eam cuncta mortalium mala dissolvere, ultra neque curae neque gaudio locum esse.'

[103] SALLUST, *BeCa* 52. 13.

[104] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 10.

[105] Sallust in no way "invented" the idea of *virtus animi* or introduced it in Roman mental legacy. The greatest advocate of this intellectual kind of *virtus* was no doubt Cicero (see, for instance, H. Steinmeyer, 'Der virtus-Begriff bei Cicero und Seneca', in *Der altsprachliche Unterricht* 17 (1975), 50-59).

> Verum ex iis magistratus et imperia, postremo omnis cura rerum publicarum minime mihi hac tempestate cupienda videntur, quoniam neque virtuti honor datur neque illi, quibus per fraudem iis fuit uti, tuti aut eo magis honesti sunt. [...] Frustra autem niti neque aliud se fatigando nisi odium quaerere extremae dementiae est; nisi forte quem inhonesta et perniciosa libido tenet potentiae paucorum decus atque libertatem suam gratificari.
>
> *Of these various paths of fame, it seems to me that the holding of civil and military posts, finally all care for public offices, in these days are the least desirable. For honour is not given to the virtuous man, nor are those who obtain them by fraud, safe or for that reason more honourable. [...] However, to strive to no avail, and to acquire, by exhausting oneself, nothing else than hatred, is the height of folly – unless perhaps such a man is possessed by a detestable and fatal lust, to sacrifice his honour and freedom in support of the power of oligarchs.*

In Sallust's time, the crucial incentive of a reward for one's efforts to follow the virtuous path in public life fell away: these prizes now went to unscrupulous individuals. Notice that Sallust rejects both obtaining public offices by fraud, and striving for them in the service of oligarchs, on the same argument that they cannot provide true honour. Here we see the close connection between serving in the right way the *respublica* (the common good, not only the 'potentia paucorum'), and its just reward, true honour.[106]

Sallust adjusts the aristocratic idea of *virtus Romana* in such a way that it takes into account the pointlessness of pursuing a public career through *virtus* in these corrupt times, and the unprecedented secure situation of Rome. He expands it in two ways. Public offices, the traditional stage of *virtus*, are open to all Roman citizens, not only to noblemen, so that noble birth was no longer an issue. Sallust approves therefore the presence of *novi homines* on the political scene, as long as they behave virtuously.[107]

Secondly, he promotes a wider range of areas in which one can exercise one's *virtus* in these difficult times. This used to be limited to the military and political field. Because Sallust focuses on *virtus* as a more internal, and intellectual condition, the 'virtus animi', a wider range of possibilities opens up to the Roman citizen to exercise his *virtus* even in leisurely retirement. According to D.C. Earl, Sallust sees *virtus* as 'the functioning of *ingenium* to achieve *egregia facinora* and thus to win *gloria* by the exercise of *bonae artes*.'[108] Sallust further names some of these *bonae artes* explicitly in his works: *fides*, *probitas* and *industria*. The fact that Sallust does not actually mention whether his wider concept of *virtus* is still in service of the *respublica*, does not need to worry us too much.[109] According to M. Ridley, *virtue* is almost

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[106] Cicero, too, makes a clear distinction between serving the *respublica* and serving one's own interests, even if both may seem to require courage, bravery, and determination (CICERO, *Tusculan Disputations* III. ii (3-4)).

[107] Sallust had not much confidence in these *novi homines*: (*BeJu* 4. 7, cited also by D.C. Earl 1961, p. 40): 'Etiam homines novi qui antea per virtutem soliti erant nobilitatem antevenire, furtim et per latrocinia potius quam bonis artibus ad imperia et honores nituntur' ('*Even the new men who formerly relied on virtus to outstrip the nobility, strove now more by stealth and through villainy for military command and public offices than via honourable means*').

[108] D.C. Earl 1961, p. 16.

[109] D.C. Earl (1961, pp. 31-32) emphasises its importance.

by definition serving the greater good, i.e. in Roman terms, the *respublica.*[110] Sallust is indeed of the opinion that the *respublica* is likely to accrue more profit from his leisured retirement than from the busy activity of others.[111]

The private occupation which lies closest to his heart is historiography. In his youth he was greatly interested in it. His political ambitions adjourned this passion for history. Now, after his withdrawal from public life (*BeCa* 4), he can take it up again. He knows that many would think it impossible to exercise *virtus* outside public life. Sallust is keen to show how arduous historiography can be, what benefits it can offer to the common good, and the great immortal fame it could give him. Cicero did something similar: after it became impossible to pursue his political career, he picked up again his youthful intellectual interest in philosophy during his leisurely retirement.[112] He also would philosophically underpin the value of *virtus animi.*

## 4. 'SED PROFECTO FORTUNA IN OMNI RE DOMINATUR'

One of the most puzzling *Fortuna* passages in Sallust's works, is also the one Augustine quotes twice in his *De civitate Dei*:[113]

> Sed profecto Fortuna in omni re dominatur; ea res cunctas ex lubidine magis quam ex vero celebrat obscuratque.[114]
>
> *But no doubt Fortuna rules in every situation; all events she renders famous or conceals, more according to her caprice than according to real fact.*

P. McGushin comments: 'The idea of *Fortuna* portrayed here should be taken as a Greek concept within a Greek context; *Fortuna* is represented as the arbitrary power lying beyond the control of man.'[115] Sallust's statement seems indeed odd, especially when compared to his thoughts on the power of *virtus*, which is able to keep in check the vicissitudes of *Fortuna.* Does Sallust believe what he says here about *Fortuna*? After all, the word 'profecto' ('*truly*') seems to emphasise the veracity of his statement.

Sulla expresses a similar idea in his address to Bocchus in *Bellum Jugurthinum* (102.9): 'Sed quoniam humanarum rerum Fortuna pleraque regit' ('*But since Fortuna rules most of the human events...*'). He tries in his speech to dissuade Bocchus, king of Mauretania, of forming an alliance with the Numidian Jugurtha. He even suggests that Bocchus could atone for his

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[110] Also Cicero insists that *virtus* is something which needs to be employed in serving the *respublica.* (CICERO, *De republica* I. 20, quoted by Penelope D. Johnson 1975, p. 118).
[111] SALLUST, *BeJu* 4. 5.
[112] CICERO, *Tusculan Disputations* V. ii (5).
[113] AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* VIII. 3.
[114] SALLUST, *BeCa* 8. 1.
[115] P. McGushin 1977, p. 8.

earlier hostility towards Rome by helping them in the war.[116] Their co-operation will result in a treacherous conspiracy, which will mean the end of Jugurtha (*BeJu* 111-113). In his speech Sulla seems to offer Bocchus a ready excuse for his previous enmity towards Rome: it was not his fault, he had only been a pawn in the game of *Fortuna*, and she had decided to follow such a course. Bocchus' answer confirms this idea: he vigorously denies having been a play-ball of *Fortuna*, a victim of circumstances, and he justifies his enmity towards Rome, giving several reasons why he took the decision to fight the Romans, and to choose the side of Jugurtha.[117]

One is reminded of the introduction in *Bellum Jugurthinum* (1.1-5), wherein Sallust accuses the Romans of blaming their inactivity on external circumstances, instead of holding themselves responsible for their behaviour. If they would exercise their *virtus*, he says, 'neque regerentur magis quam regerent casus' (*BeJu* 1.5) (*'they would not rather be governed by chance than control chance'*). Thus the *Fortuna* passage (*BeJu* 102.9) is contrary to Sallust's own attitude towards *Fortuna*, and the context makes clear that, actually, it is an example of the wrong attitude many Romans show towards her, a fact he laments in his introduction.

In passage *BeCa* 8.1, however, the historian himself is speaking. How can Sallust, who claimed that *virtus* is superior to *Fortuna*, admit that she controls all affairs?[118] The context of this phrase has to clarify this inconsistency. The passage as a whole interrupts Sallust's eulogy of the exploits of the ancient Romans. Sallust regrets the incongruity between their feats and the lack of renown they enjoyed later on in the world. It is commonplace to hold *Fortuna/Tyche* accountable for an unjust situation. Fame did not follow the Roman exploits as it should have done, just as public offices did not go to the virtuous citizens in Sallust's life-time. Therefore, *Fortuna* 'res cunctas ex lubidine magis quam ex vero celebrat obscuratque'. There seems to be no rule, no consistency between the heroic deeds of people and the afterlife of those exploits: this seems to be totally dependent on chance. However, Sallust puts his finger also on the real causes of this irregularity. The Athenian deeds received greater renown than the Roman, although they were not more impressive, but because very skilled historians ('scriptores magnae ingeniae') celebrated them in their works.[119] The Romans, unlike the Greeks, neglected this intellectual field of activity, because they preferred deeds to words: the cleverest men were also the busiest ('prudentissimus

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[116] G. Schweicher 1963, p. 57: 'Sulla nennt in seiner Rede an Bocchus die 'fortuna', die 'humanarum rerum pleraque regit', gleichsam als Entschuldigung für dessen bisherige Feindschaft mit Rom. Er will ihm die Möglichkeit geben, ohne sein Gesicht zu verlieren, in Roms 'amicitia' zu gelangen.' He too sees similarities between *BeJu* 102. 9, and *BeCa* 8. 1 (p. 56).

[117] *BeJu* 102. 12-14.

[118] The blatant contradiction has been noticed by many scholars. See, for instance, K. Büchner 1982, p. 307; D.J. Stewart 1968, pp. 300-301; H. Erkell 1952, pp. 151-152.

[119] SALLUST, *BeCa* 8. 2-5.

quisque maxume negotiosus erat').[120] As a result, their deeds remained in obscurity compared to those of the Greeks. Again, we have, as in *BeCa* 10.1, the introduction of the concept of *Fortuna* while it seems perfectly clear what Sallust means even if the *Fortuna* phrase would be left out. Why does he nevertheless make use of her in this section (*BeCa* 8. 1)? Because, in full agreement with *BeCa* 10. 1, it hints at something vital about his concept of her: its connection with *virtus.*

Sallust is stressing the importance of historiography within the *Fortuna* passage, for he says that deeds which are not celebrated in words loose much of their beneficial influence, since they inevitably end in obscurity. One could take the *Fortuna* passage in question to mean: *Fortuna* rules in ALL human affairs, BECAUSE she decides according to her own whim which events eventually will become famous. In stressing the 'magna ingenia' of the Greek historians, which is closely linked to 'virtus animi',[121] Sallust himself will fill this gap in Roman culture by writing (part of) its history, so that this anomaly, apparently caused by *Fortuna,* will be removed by the exercise of his *virtus.* Once again, we find here the link between neglect of using one's *virtus* - this time in the more intellectual department of historiography which Sallust wishes to promote - and the devastating impact of a whimsical *Fortuna caeca.*

## 5. *FORTUNA* IN AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS

This brief section aims to illustrate that the concept of *Fortuna* still had its place within the Roman historiography of Augustine's lifetime. Notwithstanding the fact that Augustine does not seem to have consulted Ammianus' work, it is possible to obtain some worthwhile results from a comparison between the works of these two figures. It is a big leap from the late republican Sallust (86 BC – 35 BC) to Ammianus Marcellinus (*c.* AD 330 – after 390), the last great Roman historian. Rome had undergone during those centuries some dramatic institutional changes. From a free *respublica* it was transformed into a Principate, and later on, to what has been called 'the Dominate'.[122] It is maybe the more surprising that the concept of *Fortuna* had not changed that much over the centuries within the discipline of Roman history writing.

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120 SALLUST, *BeCa* 8.5.
121 D.J. Stewart 1968, p. 300.
122 A. Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284-430* (London: Fontana Pres, 1993), p. 2.

## 5.1. Some Similar Findings

A study of the elusive idea of *Fortuna* confronts us with the same difficulties for the *Historiae* of Ammianus Marcellinus as had been the case for the works of Sallust. The same cautiousness can be found in C.P.T. Naudé's article on *Fortuna* in Ammianus' *Res gestae.*[123] One of the aspects of *Fortuna* in Ammianus' work, we have encountered before: the idea of Sallust's *Fortuna rei publicae*, reappears, but under the form of *Fortuna orbis Romani* (XXV.9.7), a (literary) goddess more suitable for the universal status of imperial Rome.

Another familiar idea we find in Ammianus' explanation of Rome's rise to power:

> Tempore quo primis auspiciis in mundanum fulgorem surgeret victura dum erunt homines Roma, ut augeretur sublimibus incrementis, foedere pacis aeternae Virtus convenit atque Fortuna plerumque dissidentes, quarum si altera defuisset, ad perfectam non venerat summitatem. (XIV. 6, 3)
>
> *At a time when Rome, a city destined to endure as long as the human race survives, was beginning its ascent to world-wide renown, virtus and Fortuna, which are so often at variance, conspired in an unbreakable bond to assist the steps by which it rose to glory. If either had failed Rome would never have reached the height of greatness.*

Ammianus, in line with the universal historian Florus, stresses the two forces at work. As argued before, it has been Sallust's unique contribution to highlight the correlation between these two concepts.

New, of course, are the frequent references to the 'personal' *Fortuna* of emperors, where she tends to become assimilated to their *genius*, fulfilling the function of a guardian spirit.[124] Of the various shades of meaning of *Fortuna*, however, by far the most common one in Ammianus is that of the now familiar *Fortuna-Tyche.* She is much more elaborately depicted than in Sallust's work, and also her wheel, the *rota Fortuna* is mentioned.[125] This instrument of the goddess became well known in the Middle Ages, mainly because of its prominent role in Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae.*[126]

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[123] C.P.T. Naudé, '*Fortuna* in Ammianus Marcellinus', *Acta Classica* 7 (1964), 70-88 (p. 77).

[124] C.P.T. Naudé 1964, p. 81; *Fortuna Augusta* led also a life outside literature, and could be found on numerous votive inscriptions and coins. Paying honour to this goddess was 'an expression of loyalty to the State and the reigning emperor' (I. Kajanto 1981, pp. 516-517).

[125] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXVI.8, 13: 'quivis beatus, versa rota Fortunae, ante vesperum potest esse miserrimus'; *Historiae* XXXI.1, 1: 'Fortunae volucris rota adversa prosperis semper alternans'

[126] Ammianus sometimes indicates the metaphorical intention of these features of *Fortuna*, with words such as *quodammodo*, *quaedam*, *velut*, or *quasi*; C.P.T. Naudé 1964, p. 87; for instance XXV.4, 14 and XXII.9, 1.

## 5.2. The Relation between *Fortuna* and *Adrastia*

An important issue that rises from Ammianus' concept of *Fortuna* is in what way she relates to *Adrastia/Nemesis*. According to A. Demandt the terms *Fortuna, fors, Adrastia*, and *Nemesis* are 'inhaltlich nicht scharf zu trennen und gehen ineinander über'.[127] Ammianus does seem to introduce *Adrastia* as a concept differing from *Fortuna*,[128] because central to *Adrastia* (*Ἀδράστεια*) was her sense of justice ('ultrix facinorum impiorum bonorumque praemiatrix'), and her origin according to the old theogonies confirms this characteristic ('filia Iustitia'). *Adrastia* seems to be responsible for just those *Fortuna*-caprices, which can be regarded as righteous.

Compare, for instance,

> Nunc erectas mentium cervices opprimit et enervat, nunc bonos ab imo suscitans ad bene vivendum extollit.
>
> *At one moment she [sc. Adrastia] bears down upon the stiff necks of the proud and takes away their strength, at another she raises the good out of the dust and exalts them to prosperity.*[129]

with the actions of *Fortuna* a few lines later:

> Assumptus autem in amplissimum Fortunae fastigium versabilis eius motus expertus est, qui ludunt mortalitatem nunc evehentes quosdam in sidera, nunc ad Cocyti profunda mergentes'
>
> *After reaching the highest place that Fortuna can give, he [=Gallus, brother of Julian, the Apostate] experienced the caprice by which she makes a mockery of human life, at one moment exalting men to the sky and at the next plunging them into the depths of hell.*[130]

The latter is no longer the divinity who brings justice, but a goddess who plays with human beings as her toys, lifting them up and bringing them down not according to merit, but according to her fancy.

We have seen, however, that the early *Tyche* was linked to Nemesis (*Νέμεσις*), but that she later broke loose to become the Hellenistic capricious Tyche.[131] Also inscription *CIL* III.1125, found in Dacia, links both divinities with each other: '*Deae Nemesi sive Fortunae*'. How can two such diverse heavenly powers controlling human affairs exist next to each other in Ammianus' work? The historian provides us with the answer: '*aliquotiens* operatur Adrastia atque *utinam semper*' [*Italics are mine*]. The historian could only wish that *Adrastia* would always be in action, not only from time to time. The righteous divinity is further described in more fatalistic Stoic terminology, but where also *Fortuna* traits are not far away:

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[127] A. Demandt 1965, p. 100.
[128] This is in XIV.11, 25-26, from which the Latin quotations come about *Adrastia* further on in the text.
[129] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XIV.11.26; trans. by W. Hamilton, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Later Roman Empire (AD 354 – 378)* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 63.
[130] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XIV.11, 29, trans. W. Hamilton 1986, p. 63.
[131] C.P.T. Naudé 1964, pp. 70-71, quoting on p. 70, n.6 Agatha Buriks, *Περὶ Τύχης*, diss., (Leiden, 1948), p. 1.

> Haec ut regina causarum et arbitra rerum ac disceptatrix urnam sortium temperat accidentium vices alternans voluntatumque nostrarum exorsa interdum alio, quam quo contendebant, exitu terminans multiplices actus permutando convolvit. Eademque necessitatis insolubili retinaculo mortalitatis vinciens fastus tumentes in cassum et incrementorum detrimentorumque momenta versans.
>
> *Queen over all causation and arbiter and umpire of all events, she controls the urn from which men's lots are cast and regulates their vicissitudes of fortune, often bringing their enterprises to a different end from which they designed and confounding their various actions by the changes which she imposes. It is she, too, who binds the vainly swelling pride of mortal men in the indissoluble chain of necessity, and casts, as she alone can, her weight into the scale by which they rise or fall.*[132]

In the discussion on the relationship between *Fortuna* and *fatum* in the chapter on religion, there seemed a close affinity to have come about between them. I. Kajanto thinks that *Fortuna* could have originated from the Etruscan type of fates. This connection is here also visible in the close bonds between *Fortuna* and *Adrastia.* Ammianus gives us an excellent account how these two ideas are intertwined with each other: those who believe in *Adrastia* rather than in *Fortuna* see repeatedly proud men fall and good men rise, but ... not always! Sometimes inexplicable injustices happen too. Those who accentuate the all-powerfulness of *Fortuna* only see men lifted up and falling down without any order or principle, but solely depending on chance, i.e. on the whimsicality of *Fortuna.* It will of course happen that in this random process a good man will receives his just reward, and a bad man will be punished, but since also good men sometimes fall down, and bad men are lifted up, they conclude that there is no overall justice in these events discernible.

There seems to be a contradiction within Ammianus' presentation of *Adrastia*: if she is 'regina causarum et arbitra rerum' (*'queen over all causation and arbiter and umpire of events'*), how come she does not always bring about justice, but only from time to time? This contradiction can be solved if we distinguish the common notion of *Adrastia* among people and Ammianus' own comment about this figure: 'operatur Adrastia utinam semper!' (*'If only she would always be engaged!'*).

Ammianus acknowledges that there are things happening which are unjust, and that, if there is a powerful just divinity at work behind human affairs, then there are always things happening by which this is not the case, as if she turns a blind eye to certain events.

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[132] Trans. W. Hamilton 1986, p. 63.

## 5.3. Ammianus' Optimism about the Future of Rome, the Eternal City

Remarkable, however, is the realisation that despite the many occurrences wherein man seems to be a play-ball of *Fortuna*,[133] Ammianus nevertheless still seems to hang on to his belief in divine justice.[134] Whence came this optimistic view of a Roman world which Ammianus himself depicts in rather pessimistic terms, culminating in the disaster of Adrianople? One of the reasons, I believe, is Ammianus' unfaltering admiration for the Roman achievement. This is above all noticeable in his respect for Rome, which he calls 'urbs sacratissima' (XXVII. 3, 3), 'caput mundi' (XIV. 6, 23), and no less than fifteen times 'urbs aeterna'.[135]

A. Demandt thinks that because of his veneration of Rome and its great deeds of the past, at a time when the actual power had moved away from the ancient city, Ammianus stood close to the circle of Symmachus, a group of pagan noblemen, and exponents of the Senatorial culture.[136] This is also the opinion of C.P.T. Naudé, who points out that, besides his insistence on the old Roman *virtus* and *gravitas*, Ammianus had also a great interest in, and respect for, Cicero and Virgil, two authors who stood at the centre of their propagated culture.[137] This assumption does however not tally with the decadent picture Ammianus paints of the Roman nobility in two famous digressions (XIV.6 and XXVIII.4). His high opinion and preoccupation with military *virtus* are far removed from the world wherein this literary circle of prominent aristocrats lived: they preferred to talk and write about the great deeds of their Rome, rather than being actively involved in the politics of war. Their political activity mainly involved oratorical manoeuvring, as Symmachus exemplifies with his memorandum to the emperor Gratian for reinstalling the altar of Victoria in the Senate house.[138]

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[133] Ammianus gives several examples in *Historiae* XIV. 11, 29-34, which concludes with the line: 'quae omnia si scire quisquam velit quam varia sint et adsidua, harenarum numerum idem iam desipiens et montium pondera scrutari putabit' ('*To try to fathom the variety and frequency of such events would be as foolsih as to try to number the sands of the sea or to calculate the weight of mountains*').

[134] A. Demandt 1965, p. 106: 'Ammian sieht, daß nicht immer das Verdienst belohnt wird, aber er findet sich mit der Ungerechtigkeit des Schicksals nicht ab und ist auch nicht bereit, seinen Glauben preiszugeben', and further: 'Sein Vertrauen auf die göttliche Gerechtigkeit wird zwar auf die Probe gestellt, ist aber nicht eigentlich zu erschüttern'.

[135] A. Demandt 1965, p. 115.

[136] A. Demandt 1965, p. 117.

[137] C.P.T. Naudé 1964, p. 77; W. Ensslin *Zur Geschichtsschreibung und Weltanschauung des Ammianus Marcellinus*, Klio Beiheft 16 (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1923; repr. 1963), p. 62: 'Jedenfalls stellen wir fest, daß Ammian sich in Gedankengängen bewegt, die wir aus Macrobius kennen, der in seinen Saturnalien sich bemüht hat, die geistigen Interessen des Nicomachus-Symmachuskreises zu schildern.' Ammianus' more tolerant view on Christianity, though he was a pagan, is another element, which distinguishes him from Symmachus' circle.

[138] P.Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971; repr. 1997), p. 121.

Ammianus' relative optimism about Rome's future can also be observed in his reflection on the calamity of Adrianople (AD 378), wherein the Goths killed emperor Valens.

> Negant antiquitatum ignari tantis malorum tenebris offusam aliquando fuisse rem publicam, sed falluntur malorum recentium stupore confixi. namque si superiores vel recens praeteritae revolvantur aetates, tales tamque tristes rerum motus saepe contigisse monstrabunt.[139]
>
> *Those who are ignorant of ancient times say that this was the darkest disaster which ever fell upon the respublica, but they are led astray by the horror they feel at this latest catastrophe. A review of earlier or even quite recent history will show that such melancholy events have often happened.*

Examples are given of the joint attack of Teutones and Cimbri (at the end of the second century BC), and the disturbances under emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180).

He then continues:

> Verum mox post calamitosa dispendia res in integrum sunt restitutae hac gratia, quod nondum solutioris vitae mollitie sobria vetustas infecta nec ambitiosis mensis nec flagitiosis quaestibus inhiabat, sed unanimanti ardore summi et infimi inter se congruentes ad speciosam pro re publica mortem tamquam ad portum aliquem tranquillum properabant et placidum.[140]
>
> *But after these calamitous losses the situation was restored. This was because our old, sober morality had not yet been undermined by the temptations of a laxer and more effeminate way of life; there was no craving for ostentatious banquets and ill-gotten gain. High and low alike were of one mind, and eager to meet a glorious death for their country as if it were a peaceful and quiet haven.*

Notice the Sallustian flavour of this passage: its moral tone, (although the moral deterioration had already set in since 146 BC according to Sallust), the stress on internal *concordia* ('unanimanti'), and the 'cupido gloria' of the soldiers, here expressed in a Virgilian manner: 'ad speciosam pro re publica mortem properabant' (*'they hastened towards a beautiful death in aid of their respublica'*).[141]

Later on, Ammianus ascribed such calamities to the working of *Fortuna*:

> Nec ulla annalibus praeter Cannensem pugnam ita ad internecionem res legitur gesta, quamquam Romani aliquotiens reflante Fortuna fallaciis lusi bellorum iniquitati cesserunt *ad tempus*, et certamina multa fabulosae naeniae flevere Graecorum [*Italics are mine*].[142]
>
> *No battle in our history except Cannae was such a massacre, though more than once the Romans have been the playthings of Fortuna and suffered* temporary *reverses, and many disastrous struggles are recorded with grief in the legendary sagas of Greece.*

Ammianus gives thus a lesson in history to his readers, and recalls earlier disasters happening to Rome. He wants his audience to put into perspective the graveness of the

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[139] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXXI. 5, 11.
[140] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXXI. 5, 14.
[141] VIRGIL, *Georgics* IV. 217-218: 'et saepe attollunt umeris et corpora bello / obiectant pulchramque petunt per vulnera mortem'.
[142] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXXI. 13, 19.

situation. He offers hope to them, arguing that Rome has overcome similar setbacks in the past by its *virtus Romana.*

Many Romans were gravely shocked by the news of the sack of Rome in AD 410. Christians and pagans alike found it hard to imagine that Rome had (temporarily) fallen. The panic which it no doubt caused among the populace, made the call for reintroducing the pagan rituals the more urgent. It remains in the end impossible to fathom how seriously Ammianus' belief in *Roma aeterna* and divine justice would have been shaken if he would have still been alive when his eternal city was sacked by the Goths in AD 410.

# CHAPTER III

# *FORTUNA* IN PHILOSOPHY

The practically-minded Romans mainly used philosophy for utilitarian ends, by regarding it as a practical guide in life.[1] Consequently, one can expect to find a strong connection between the interest in a certain school of philosophy among educated Romans, and the problems and needs this particular group encountered in life. This section will focus on three major philosophies: Stoicism (in particular the Roman Stoa), Epicureanism, and (Neo-)Platonism.[2] Although Augustine himself was temporarily attracted to academic scepticism,[3] this philosophical school is less relevant in the context of *Fortuna*, since it did not develop a positive system.

## 1. THE STOIC ORDER

Although the two rival schools, Stoicism and Epicureanism, had much in common - both held materialistic doctrines - they widely diverged concerning the basic principle of the universe. To the Stoics the universe was a living organism, in which every event formed part of *fatum*, the 'ordered interweaving of causes'.[4] Since nothing escaped the uninterrupted series of cause and effect, everything in the universe was fated, and its future determined.

The idea of an ordered universe must have been recognizable to the Romans. They always had shown a great concern for (social) order, which is exemplified in their written

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[1] H.H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome 133 BC – AD 68* (London: Methuen, 1963 2nd edition), p. 211; C.N. Cochrane (1944, p. 40): 'With Lucretius, he [Cicero] looked to philosophy [...], regarding its findings as imperfect unless they pointed to conclusions which would be of practical service to mankind'. Ethics became therefore the focus of attention. See also Marcia L. Colish (1985, I, p. 13) for the importance of ethics in the Roman Stoa.

[2] Usually Stoicism is divided into three stages: the ancient Stoa, the middle Stoa, and the Roman Stoa, of whom Seneca (*c.* 4 BC – AD 65) was the earliest Roman Stoic and the only one who wrote in the Latin language (Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, pp. 7 and 13). What posterity has termed "Neoplatonism" was to the man of Antiquity the mere recovery of Plato's teaching, so that these philosophers regarded themselves as *platonici*. In order to convey both aspects I will consistently write '(Neo-)Platonism'.

[3] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* V. xiv (25).

[4] Charlotte Stough, 'Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility', in J.M. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics* (Major Thinkers Series 1) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 203-231 (p. 205), quoting AETIUS, *SVF* 2.976; Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 24.

civil law (still based on *The Twelve Tables*).[5] This made them more receptive to the Stoic concept of the existence of a universal natural law.[6] The rigorous organization of the Republican society and the meticulous formalism of Roman religious practice are further indications of a long-established preference for a well-ordered outlook on life.[7] Major public figures such as Cato and Brutus, who lived during the turbulent period of a disintegrating society in the first century BC, were attracted to Stoicism. One could reasonably argue that Stoicism provided them with some kind of reassurance that there was still an ordered system to fall back on, in a world seemingly at the mercy of a whimsical *Fortuna*. Unaffected by the tumult around them, they fulfilled their duty in the name of a free *respublica*. R. Syme considered Roman Stoicism of the late Republic to be 'nothing more than a corroboration and theoretical defence of certain traditional virtues of the governing class in an aristocratic and republican state'.[8] The Stoic tenet that *virtus* was the only thing needed for a happy life[9] could indeed strengthen the traditional ideology of the ruling elite, which based its actions on *mos maiorum*, i.e. its ancestry customs.

Traditional rewards for excellence in *virtus*, namely magistracies and honours, were sometimes bestowed upon less upright people.[10] Bribery, personal favours, and party strife had put justice in jeopardy. Stoic doctrine could offer a motivation for individuals, to exercise their *virtus* in public life, despite the difficult situation they found themselves in. *Virtus*, it was argued, contained its own reward, and it was not in need of unreliable worldly gifts. In the section on Epicureanism, an alternative view of the universe will be presented, which provided the educated Roman elite, who had to face the turmoil of a failing *respublica*, with a different, more radical solution: withdrawal from public affairs, to seek happiness among a group of like-minded friends in pursuit of philosophy.

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[5] According to Cicero the superiority of Roman civil law compared to those of other nations was overwhelming. (*De oratore* I.197): 'incredibile est enim, quam sit omne ius civile praeter hoc nostrum inconditum ac paene ridiculum' ('*All other systems of civil law, compared with our own, are incredibly primitive and almost ridiculous*'). Roman law can indeed be regarded as one of the most characteristic products of Roman civilisation.

[6] In turn, Roman law has frequently been studied to trace Stoic influence in it. Marcia L. Colish (1985, I, pp. 341-389) investigated such a claim and concludes that only 'a tangential and superficial relationship' existed between Stoicism and Roman jurisprudence. The ancient orators, and above all Cicero, made a theoretical connection between Stoic natural law and ethics, and Roman legislation (p. 389). See also G. Watson, 'The Natural Law and Stoicism', in A.A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London: The Athlone Press, 1971), pp. 216-238. He refers to the new responsibilities of Rome as a world power, with a need for international (universal) justice, quoting the famous lines of Virgil (*Aeneid* VI.851-853: 'tu regere imperio populos Romane memento. (hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem, parcere subiectis et debellare superbos').

[7] D. & Elisabeth Henry, *The Mask of Power: Seneca's Tragedies and Imperial Power* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1985), p. 46.

[8] R. Syme 1939, p. 57.

[9] In book III of Cicero's *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, Cato defends the Stoic position that *virtus* is the sole good and has its reward in itself.

[10] See SALLUST, *Bellum Jugurthinum* 3.

## 1.1. Roman Stoa: Seneca

Seneca (*c.* 4 BC – AD 65), the earliest expounder of the Roman Stoa,[11] proves to be an excellent source for a study on *Fortuna*. Gerda Bush remarks: 'Der Römer, der nach dem Wesen der *fortuna* tiefer geforscht hat als die anderen for ihm, ist Seneca'.[12] Only when Seneca's own experiences of the ruling elite in Roman society are taken into account, does his attitude towards *Fortuna* become more understandable.[13]

### 1.1.1. The New Regime

Augustus claimed that he had restored the *respublica*.[14] He thereby acknowledged the traditional functions and ideology of the nobility. However, the reality was that the *libertas* of the old *respublica* had died together with its defenders Cato, Cicero and Brutus.[15] Augustus had grafted his authority onto the republican institutions, so that most of the actual power of the nobles was transferred to the *princeps* and his private circle, among whom several were of humble descent. Later, even freedmen climbed up to important unofficial functions.[16] The nobility tried to preserve its dignity and prestige, supported by its glorious past, even though the *respublica* was not theirs anymore to command.[17] The forced co-operation between *princeps* and senate caused a lot of frustration on both sides.[18]

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[11] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 13.

[12] Gerda Bush, 'Fortunae resistere in der Moral des Philosophen Seneca', *Antike und Abendland* 10 (1961), 131-154 (p. 138). Similar observations are made by I. Kajanto (1981, p. 542), and J.C. Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune in the Middle Ages*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), p. 16: 'In Seneca's works one finds probably the best example of the Roman philosophical view of *Fortuna*; in fact, his is perhaps the most Roman view altogether'.

[13] Also P. Boyancé emphasises the part Seneca's experiences in life played for his original interpretation of Stoic doctrine. (P. Boyancé, 'Die Stoa in Rom' in *Seneca als Philosoph*, Wege der Forschung 414 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), p. 42. Miriam T. Griffin (1976, p. 388) further points to the importance of the kind of audience Seneca was aiming at with his works, i.e. the ruling elite. Their situation must also have influenced his themes.

[14] R. Syme (1939, p. 323): 'The "constitutional" settlement of the years 28 and 27 BC was described in official language as "respublica reddita" or "res publica restituta"'.

[15] M. Fuhrmann (transl. by W.E. Yuill), *Cicero and the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 218: 'More than the death of a Cato or a Brutus, Cicero's death symbolized the passing of Republican freedom'.

[16] R. Syme 1939, pp. 323 – 330; se also TACITUS, *Annales* I. 2: 'munia senatus magistratuum legum in se trahere' ('*He [sc. Octavian] absorbed the functions of the senate, the officals, and even the law*').

[17] D. & E. Elisabeth Henry, *The Mask of Power: Seneca's Tragedies and Imperial Power* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1985), p. 49. Chapter II ('The fear of disintegration', pp. 40-55) of this book focuses on the difficult ideological situation of the wealthy nobility in the first century AD, who previously had held a privileged position in the free *respublica*.

[18] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 102. Every time *princeps* Tiberius left the senate house, he would remark in Greek: 'O men, fit to be slaves!' (TACITUS, *Annales* III. 64).

Despite the entry of many (even provincial) *homines novi*, the Roman senate preserved to a remarkable degree a uniformity of patterns of thought.[19] Their conservative, traditional ideology, based on the *mos maiorum* and the glorification of the past, has much to do with this fact. The personality of the individual within the Roman nobility was "dyadic": everyone expected that each person would reflect the whole group, and this was realised through the propagation of stereotypes, which exemplified the ideal behaviour.[20] The nobleman was encouraged to imitate the deeds of his glorious ancestors, and in turn the *novi homines* became for their sons examples to imitate.[21] Deep engraved in the noble's conscious was his public duty to serve the *respublica*.[22] In the past, they had competed with each other, displaying and exercising their *virtus* in service of the *respublica* to win *gloria*, office and distinction.[23] The eager pursuit of individual pre-eminence among the nobility, however, had also led to the terrible civil wars, which almost became the ruin of Rome.

Too great a thirst for glory was also unwelcome within the imperial system, which demanded, above all, acquiescence towards the rule of the *princeps*.[24] Not only moderation in pursuit of personal glory was therefore necessary, but also obedience and subordination. For conservative republican noblemen this was the next thing to slavery.[25] Their prestige, dignity, and pride in belonging to the noblest order (*amplissimus ordo*)[26] could not but conflict with their subservient and impotent position in relation to the *princeps*. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz writes: 'The facts of power forced the *princeps* into monarchical behaviour, just as it forced the nobility into servility'.[27] The great problem for the nobleman was therefore to try to reconcile the traditional spur to seek glory by exercising *virtus* in service of the so-called restored *respublica*, with the pressure to comply with the authority of the *princeps*: 'tibi summum rerum iudicium di dedere, nobis obsequii gloria relicta est' ('*The gods have given you* [*sc. princeps* Tiberius] *supreme control – to us is left the glory of obeying!*').[28] Historiography used to

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[19] G. Alföldi, *The Social History of Rome* (trans. by D. Braund & F. Pollock), rev. edn (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 117. According to P. Brown (*The World of Late Antiquity AD 150-750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971; repr. 1997), p. 14) the aristocracy had 'an amazingly uniform culture'.

[20] G.B. Thompson, 'The Emerging Tension Between Self and Society, as Exemplified in Augustine', *Listening* 25.1 (1990), p. 270.

[21] For instance, CICERO, *De officiis* I.78: 'Licet enim mihi, Marce fili, apud te gloriari, ad quem et hereditas huius gloriae et factorum imitatio pertinet' ('*To you, Marcus my son, I can make this boast, for this fame of mine is your inheritance, and my deeds are for you to imitate*'); trans. by P.G. Walsh, *Cicero: On Obligations* (New York: Oxford University Press (Oxford World's Classics), 2001), p. 27.

[22] D.C. Earl 1970, p. 90.

[23] D.C. Earl 1970, p. 83, quoting TACITUS, *Agricola* 44.3.

[24] D.C. Earl 1970, p. 89.

[25] D.C. Earl 1967, p. 93.

[26] G. Alföldi 1988, p. 117.

[27] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 102.

[28] TACITUS, *Annales* VI. 8: (Words of a speech delivered by the *eques* Marcus Terentius in front of the senate). *Gloria obsequii* captures well the tension between the ideology of the nobility and the reality of the political situation.

provide its readers with heroic exempla, but it soon degraded into a summing up of the many intrigues at court. This can be an indication of a lack of opportunities for traditional virtuous behaviour under the *princeps*.[29]

### 1.1.2. Seneca's Turbulent Career[30]

Seneca's career can be regarded as illustrative of the new state of affairs at Rome. He was born in Spanish Cordoba as the son of a wealthy provincial *eques* - the renowned rhetorician Seneca, "the Elder". In the traditional free *respublica* his chances of becoming a senator would have been as good as non-existent. However, in the principate good connections and ability could make up for lack of noble ancestry. Seneca had an uncle who held the important post of prefect of Egypt, one of the highest positions attainable for an *eques*.[31] His oratorical talent proved also very helpful for his career. He probably was granted the *latus clavis* by imperial sanction, and became *quaestor* when he was already about forty years old. He found to his cost that excelling in eloquence could be lethal in the principate, when he aroused the jealousy of Gaius (Caligula) and narrowly escaped death. His further career plans received an unexpected, serious setback in AD 41, when he was accused by the *princeps* Claudius of adultery with one of the sisters of Gaius (Caligula). He was relegated to the island of Corsica. Eight years later (AD 49), Seneca's life took again a radical turn. Agrippina, after marrying her uncle, the *princeps* Claudius, not only brought about the recall of Seneca from exile in AD 49, she also secured his praetorship for the following year. Later (AD 56), he fulfilled the function of suffect consul, the highest senatorial magistracy of his career.[32] For all his efforts in pursuit of the traditional *cursus honorum*, the actual power obtained through senatorial functions had sharply fallen in the principate. As a matter of fact, Seneca rarely, if ever, attended the senate.

The real power was situated at the court. After his recall, Agrippina also chose Seneca to become the personal tutor of her son Domitius. Seneca thus took up the position at the court as the boy's unofficial *magister* or *praeceptor*. When in AD 54 his pupil (now called Nero) succeeded Claudius to the purple, Seneca at once became one of the most influential *amici principis*. Together with the commander of the praetorian guard Burrus, another protégé of

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[29] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 202.

[30] A very good and comprehensive article on Seneca's life is Miriam T. Griffin, 'Imago Vitae Suae' in *Seneca*, ed. by C.D.N. Costa (London & Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 1-38. There is also by the same author the book *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). M. Fuhrmann, *Seneca und Kaiser Nero: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Alexander Fest, 1997; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998) offers substantial information on Seneca's background. There is further the fine French book on Seneca of P. Grimal, *Sénèque ou la conscience de l'Empire* (Paris: Société d' édition "Les belles lettres", 1979).

[31] G. Alföldi 1988, p. 126.

[32] Miriam T. Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 73.

Agrippina, they had, according to Tacitus and Dio, virtual control over imperial policy in the early years of Nero's reign. Their situation remained, however, precarious because of the stressful relationship between their benefactress Agrippina and her son, Nero. Both men provided the *princeps* with a safe haven from the overbearing influence of Agrippina, while she expected their help in her control over the *princeps*.

This delicate position was irrevocably destroyed when Nero murdered his mother. From then on Seneca's influence on the *princeps* dwindled. The (natural) death in AD 62 of his important political associate Burrus, meant the definitive end of his control over Nero, who found others more gratifying towards his passions for chariot-racing, singing and poetry. Twice (in AD 62 and 64) Seneca sought to obtain relief from his duties on account of his ill-health and old age, but each time Nero refused. In AD 64 Seneca nevertheless withdrew to his room, to remain there almost permanently. In April 65, his life came to a dramatic end: by imperial command he committed suicide, for his alleged complicity in the conspiracy of C. Calpurnius Piso against the *princeps*.

### 1.1.3. Seneca's Philosophy

Keeping in mind the practical use Romans made of philosophy, it should not be surprising that Seneca's own experiences had a considerable impact on his philosophical writings. Early in Nero's reign (AD 55-56), Seneca wrote *De clementia* for the *princeps*. A new ideology can be detected in this treatise, which was more in line with the new regime at Rome. Further, Seneca's preoccupation with, and attitude towards, *Fortuna* can be for the most part explained by the difficulty the nobility experienced in adjusting to the changed circumstances in "their" *respublica*.[33]

#### 1. A New Ideology for a New Regime

Although Seneca, seeing that he became a member of the senate, could be regarded as a proponent of the traditional republican ideology, his powerful position at court, and his neglect of participating in the senatorial duties, suggest he must have held a more favourable view of the new order. His political treatise *De clementia* can be interpreted as an attempt to provide a more suitable ideology for the principate, because the old republican view did no longer correspond to the current state of affairs. Significant is that Stoicism became an essential element of this new Roman ideology. Further, Seneca did not refrain from openly using the word *rex* for the position of the Roman *princeps*, a word which always

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[33] G. Bush (1961, pp. 153-4), too, makes the link between Seneca's preoccupation with *Fortuna* and his own experiences in life.

had been anathema to the republican nobility.[34] In the past Octavian very carefully had opted for the title *princeps*, and he was regarded among the nobility as *primus inter pares*, so that his un-republican and unlawful accretion of power was nevertheless imbedded within republican terminology.[35]

Seneca's essay *De clementia* was an attempt to make the ideology of a one-man rule more acceptable to the Roman people in general. He defended this monarchical system by asserting that if one would eliminate the ruler this would inevitably mean a return to the chaos of the civil wars and the end of Rome. The *princeps* could be regarded as the guarantee of peace and order. Therefore, all citizens should be willing to risk their lives for their ruler.[36] Serving the *respublica* meant also obeying the *princeps*: 'Tam diu ab isto periculo aberit hic populus, quam diu sciet ferre frenos' ('*Just so long will this people be free from that danger (i.e. the destruction of Roman peace), as it shall know how to submit to the rein*').[37] Miriam T. Griffin agrees with F. Weidauer that *De clementia* 'completely ignores the political sovereignty, even the existence, of senate and people'.[38]

The accession speech of Nero in the senate, which Seneca composed for him, was no doubt more compromising towards the republican ideal: 'teneret antiqua munia senatus' ('*the senate is to preserve its ancient functions*').[39] He made the kind of promises most *principes* made at the beginning of their reign, namely to work in partnership with the senate.[40] The difference between the accession speech and the treatise shows that a different audience was given a different picture of the new regime: some pretence was unavoidable. The Roman people were indeed more sympathetic towards monarchical rule, and this can also explain the remarkable passage at the beginning of the treatise:

> Egone ex omnibus mortalibus placui electusque sum, qui in terris deorum vice fungerer? Ego vitae necisque gentibus arbiter; qualem quisque sortem statumque habeat, in mea manu positum est; quid cuique mortalium Fortuna datum velit, meo ore pronuntiat; ex nostro responso laetitiae causas populi urbesque concipiunt; nulla pars usquam nisi volente propitioque me floret; haec tot milia gladiorum, quae pax mea comprimit, ad nutum meum stringentur; quas nationes funditus excidi, quas transportari, quibus libertatem dari, quibus eripi, quos reges mancipia fieri quorumque

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[34] Miriam T. Griffin 1976, pp. 141-148.

[35] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 105: 'The position of Augustus appears to be nothing new. He is seen, as he wanted to be seen, as *primus inter pares* of the leading men in the city and only the last in a long succession of *principes*.'

[36] Seneca makes this clear (*De clementia* I.4) with the words of Virgil's *Georgics* (IV.212-13), wherein the poet compares Rome with a beehive: 'Rege incolumi mens omnibus una;
amisso rupere fidem'
('*When the king is safe, they're all of one mind;
when he is lost, they violate their allegiance*').

[37] SENECA, *De clementia* I. 4.

[38] Miriam T. Griffin 1976, p. 141 n. 2.

[39] TACITUS, *Annales* XIII. 4.

[40] Miriam T. Griffin 1976, p. 104.

> capiti regium circumdari decus oporteat, quae ruant urbes, quae oriantur, mea iuris dictio est.
>
> *Have I [sc. Nero] of all mortals found favour and been chosen, I, who administer on earth on account of the gods? I am the arbiter of life and death for the nations; it rests in my hand what each man's lot and condition shall be: by my lips Fortuna proclaims what gift she would bestow on each human being; from my utterance peoples and cities gather reasons for rejoicing; without my willing and favourable inclination no part of the wide world can prosper; all those many thousands of swords which my peace restrains will be drawn at my nod; what nations shall be utterly destroyed, which banished, which shall receive the gift of liberty, which have it taken from them, what kings shall become slaves and whose heads shall be crowned with royal honour, what cities shall fall and which shall rise – this is mine to decree.*

Seneca presents here the *princeps* as if he was the vicar of the gods, someone who has control over *Fortuna*, and the destiny of the people. These are expressions suitable for a Hellenistic monarch.[41]

Seneca no doubt tried at the same time to instruct Nero and to emphasize his own role as adviser of the *princeps*. Nero also had a responsibility and a duty: he had to act as a Stoic sage, and show *clementia* whenever it was appropriate. The importance attributed to *clementia* ever since Julius Caesar, reveals an underlying aspect of justice under a one-man rule. D.C. Earl described *clementia* as 'the arbitrary mercy, bound by no law, shown by a superior to an inferior who is entirely in his power.'[42] Not so much the (objective) law but the (subjective) character of the *princeps* determined how men were governed.[43] Since there was no constitutional body that could control the *princeps*' behaviour, one can see that Seneca nevertheless tried to hold before the *princeps* an ideal (that of the Stoic sage), which would induce the emperor to rule justly. '*The princeps should be towards his subjects, as he would wish the gods to be to himself*'[44] becomes the new standard of behaviour for Nero.

As long as Seneca could influence Nero as his adviser, the senate as a whole could be satisfied with the *princeps'* rule.[45] It would be wrong to suppose that Seneca was trying to quench any existing opposition towards the principate. Few would have thought there was a return possible to a free *respublica* anyway. Seneca rather offered, with the help of Stoic philosophy, a more realistic and acceptable political ideology, which could make it easier for the nobility to co-operate willingly with a *princeps*, when the latter was gently persuaded to take up his responsibilities as a good ruler.

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[41] Miriam T. Griffin 1976, pp. 148-149.
[42] D.C. Earl 1966, p. 101.
[43] Miriam T. Griffin 1976, p. 170.
[44] SENECA, *De clementia* 1.7: 'Optime hoc exemplum principi constituam, ad quod formetur, ut se talem esse civibus, quales sibi deos velit'.
[45] Miriam T. Griffin, 'Imago Vitae Suae', in *Seneca*, ed. by C.D.N. Costa (London & Boston: Routledge and Kegan, 1974), pp. 1-38 (p. 23).

## 2. THE RESPONSE OF THE NOBILITY

The vital question remains: how did the nobility respond to the new regime? D.C. Earl writes: 'The desire for distinction and especially for the special form of distinction designated as *gloria* was too deep-seated a part of the consciousness and tradition of the Roman political class'.[46] Some did what their tradition demanded of them and engaged in public service in search for personal glory. They often fell victim of the *princeps*' distrust of virtuous men gaining popularity, seeing that they could pose a threat to his position, especially when distinction was gained in the military field.[47] Some tried to find a middle course, combining moderate glory with rational obedience to the *princeps*.[48] Many were not ashamed of excessive sycophancy, thereby forfeiting their republican roots, in return for personal gain.[49] A considerable number stopped serving the *respublica* altogether, and spent their life in leisure at their country estates. This last solution will later be more comprehensively discussed, seeing that Augustine, too, presented himself as someone who gave up his worldly ambitions in preference of a life '*in otio*'.

The great uncertainty remained whether the nobility would willingly submit to the yoke of the *princeps*, i.e. to be his 'servants'. The *dignitas* and prestige, one might even say, the very reason of existence of the nobility were at stake. Whereas a monarch tends to level out his subjects (they are all his servants), the aristocracy prided itselves upon its privileged status within society. In the past, their importance as governors and their political power justified their privileged position. Now, in the principate they still retained some privileges compared to other Roman citizens, but their justification became more questionable. The controlling powers were for the most part transferred to one man, and he arrogated most of the honours, such as triumphs, titles such as *pater patriae*, and the erecting of statues. The nobility faced in this sense a latent identity crisis within the empire.

The question whether the Roman senate should abide by this new ideology would remain throughout the principate. The difficulties in finding the right balance between ruler and senate continued, with the involvement of senators in public affairs fluctuating throughout the ages.

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[46] D.C. Earl 1967, p. 81.

[47] For instance under Domitian: 'ob virtutes certissimim exitium' ('*the reward for virtus was inevitable death*') (TACITUS, *Historiae* I. 2); See also the observation of SALLUST, *Bellum Catilinae* 7. 2: 'nam regibus boni quam mali suspectiores sunt semperque eis aliena virtus formidulosa est' ('*For the good men are more suspicious than bad men to kings, and virtus in another is always alarming*').

[48] Seneca and also Agricola belonged to this category according to Tacitus (D.C. Earl 1967, p. 93).

[49] TACITUS, *Annales* I. 2: 'ceteri nobilium, quanto quis servitio promtior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur ac novis ex rebus aucti tuta et praesentia quam vetera et periculosa mallent' ('*The remainder of the nobility found that slavish obedience was the way to succeed, both politically and financially. They had profited from the revolution, and so now they preferred the present dispensation and safety to the older order and danger*'); see also *Annales* III. 64.

## 3. COMFORT FOR ADVERSITY: *FORTUNA* CONTROLS WORTHLESS THINGS

Seneca's dramatic life sheds some light on his overall preoccupation with *Fortuna.* From his exile he wrote a famous consolation letter to his mother Helvia.

> Numquam ego Fortunae credidi, etiam cum videretur pacem agere; omnia illa, quae in me indulgentissime conferebat, pecuniam, honores, gratiam, eo loco posui, inde posset sine motu meo repetere.[50]
>
> *Never have I trusted Fortuna, even when she seemed to be offering peace; the blessings she most fondly bestowed upon me –money, office, and influence – I stored all of them in a place from which she could take them back without disturbing me.*

Seneca states that the two most admirable goods will always be with us: universal Nature ('communis natura') and our own *virtus* ('propria *virtus*'). Whoever the creator of the universe may be (an all-powerful god, incorporeal Reason, the divine Spirit, or *fatum*), he continues,

> Id, inquam, actum est, ut in alienum arbitrium nisi vilissima quaeque non caderent. Quidquid optimum homini est, id extra humanam potentiam iacet, nec dari nec eripi potest. [51]
>
> *This, I say, was his intention, that only the most worthless of our possessions should fall under the control of another. All that is best for a man lies beyond the power of other men, who can neither give it nor take it away.*

Sallust, too, insisted that *Fortuna* could not give, nor take away any man's *bonae artes.* [52]

Seneca makes here an important distinction between those things, which are not within our control, which are the goods subject to the power of *Fortuna*, who bestows them seemingly randomly upon men, and those which are truly one's own, above all man's *virtus.*

The main thing the nobility lost was control over its *respublica.* It was, simply said, not theirs anymore. Consequently, in the conferring of offices, which usually was given as a reward of virtuous behaviour, the *princeps* often interfered, by simply recommending a person for a particular office.[53] The most important matters were discussed by the *princeps* in a private counsel, so that the senate had hardly any say or influence in these decisions. Seneca's ups and downs of his career were mainly the result of decisions taken by the *princeps*' close circle, which were outside his control.[54] Tacitus wrote: 'apud maiores virtutis id praemium fuerat' ('*This [sc. office] was among our ancestors the reward of virtus*').[55] In the

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[50] SENECA, *Ad Helviam matrem: De consolatione* V. 4.
[51] SENECA, *Ad Helviam matrem: De consolatione* VIII. 2-3.
[52] SALLUST, *Beju* I. 1.
[53] G. Alföldi 1988, p. 100: 'As the guardian of good *mores* he had the right to admit suitable persons into the equestrian order and "new men" into the senatorial order or to expel *equites* and senators from their respective orders. There were no higher offices in the bureaucracy or in the army which could be filled without his express or tacit approval'.
[54] Seneca also favoured some of his friends in the appointment of offices, as long as he had influence over the emperor.
[55] TACITUS, *Annales* XI. 22.

principate, however, this normal course was now interfered with by other motives such as favouritism, and the question of loyalty to the *princeps*. At the court of the *princeps*, which formed the nucleus of real power, there loomed the greatest danger. Seneca must have been intensely aware of this while he was caught between his benefactress Agrippina and her son the *princeps* Nero. The many intrigues and secret murders (Britannicus, Agrippina and Octavia being the most high profile ones) must have created an almost unbearable precarious and fearful environment. Seneca, too, became in the end victim of Nero's distrust towards him, and without any possibility of defence, or a fair trial, he was requested to end his life.[56] If not common agreement but the character of the *princeps* decided on important issues, many outcomes indeed remained uncertain and often seemed unfair. Within such an atmosphere it becomes necessary to brace oneself against many unexpected adversities, and to focus upon those aspects in life, which cannot be taken away by others.

Seneca's view on *Fortuna* becomes now more understandable. He offers a solution by advocating a Stoic attitude towards life, which regards all things that are no longer within one's own control, as indifferent. Detachment becomes the key for coping with adversity, whereby it is importatnt to know what is in your control and what is not. During the disintegration of the *respublica*, *Fortuna* seemed to have been in control of all the worldly goods, because Roman society was on the verge of collapse. Even when order was restored in a new regime, the principate, the same chaotic, disorder remained as a result of the power struggle in the upper echelons of society. The many dealings behind the scenes, and the unpredictability of the *princeps'* character, were decisive, uncontrollable and incalculable factors for those following the traditional path to glory.

In the passage of *De clementia* (I.2) already mentioned, Seneca suggests that it is the *princeps* who is in control of *Fortuna*: 'quid cuique mortalium Fortuna datum velit, meo ore pronuntiat' ('*by my lips Fortuna proclaims what gift she would bestow on each human being*'). Although the passage forms part of a eulogy of Nero intended for a wider audience, and therefore not devoid of rhetorical hyperbole, it does fit nicely with the idea that the nobility cannot really rely any longer on traditional principles, but are dependent on the unpredictable decisions of one man. Seneca urging the *princeps* to act as a Stoic sage, i.e. by reason, can be therefore also interpreted as Seneca trying to make the rule of the *princeps* more rational, and more just, so that the irrational, destructive actions of *Fortuna* can be curbed.

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[56] The story is told in TACITUS, *Annales* XV. 60-64.

## 4. The Nobility's New Adversary: Virtuously Fighting *Fortuna*

Within Seneca's world, the wise man seems to be constantly on the defence against life's vicissitudes. It is understandable that, with such a negative picture of life, one of the most important tasks of a nobleman, namely actively serving the *respublica*, is less interesting than it was when the free *respublica* was functioning well. In the past, the career of a young nobleman was pretty much outlined. He could feel quite confident about his future rewards of public glory, honours, and office, if he followed the customary *mos maiorum*. During the Late republic, but also during the principate, these certainties fell away. The temptation to forfeit one's duty of public service must have therefore been great, even if retreat was traditionally considered to be shameful.[57]

Seneca presents the ruling elite a frame of mind that could reassure them that, despite the many blows of *Fortuna*, the path of *virtus* remains the only path towards a happy life.[58] By exercising his *virtus* like a soldier in battle, man is able to deal with the blows of *Fortuna*.[59] Seneca frequently uses military imagery in describing the task of the wise man.[60] In this way he compares the *virtus* of the Stoic sage with the *virtus* exercised in its traditionally grandest area: the battlefield. Just as the republican framework had sustained men in their heroic resistance to foreign enemies,[61] just so did the Stoic philosophy uphold the sage in his heroic dealings with *Fortuna*.[62] Both opponents required excellence in *virtus* to be able to overcome them. The Roman Stoa thereby integrated within the Stoic philosophy something of the traditional *mos maiorum*: G. Pfliggersdorffer[63] expresses it as follows:

> Der Drang des Römers nach *virtus*-Betätigung sah hier eine der wenigen ihm damals gebliebenen Möglichkeiten: die Bewährung gegenüber einer feindlichen, erdrükkenden Umwelt, die in *Fortuna* Gestalt angenommen hatte. Mit ihrem Namen konnte man die Widerstände zusammenfassen; [...] mit ihrem Namen hatte man der *virtus* einem manifesten Widerpart zu bieten.

Although the resulting behaviour might have been similar, the motivation of the nobleman was different within the two frameworks. Within a republican order he set his eyes on glory, public honours, and other worldly rewards. These compensations became less available and often seemed less acquired by merit during the Late republic and the

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[57] D.C. Earl 1967, p. 90.

[58] SENECA, *De beata vita* XVI. 1: 'Ergo in virtute posita est vera felicitas' ('*Therefore true happiness is founded upon virtus.*'), and IV.2: 'summum bonum est animus fortuita despiciens, virtute laetus' ('*The highest good is a mind that scorns the happenings of chance, and rejoices in virtus*').

[59] SENECA, *Ad Helviam matrem: De consolatione* V.3.

[60] For instance SENECA, *Epistulae morales* LI.8: 'Fortuna mecum bellum gerit' ('*Fortuna is waging war with me*').

[61] D. & Elisabeth Henry, *The Mask of Power: Seneca's Tragedies and Imperial Rome* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1985), p. 46.

[62] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, pp. 113-114. The traditional heroic exempla received a Stoic reinterpretation.

[63] G. Pfliggersdorffer, '*Fatum* und *Fortuna*: Ein Versuch zu einem Thema frühkaiserzeitlicher Weltanschauung', *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, 2 (1961), pp. 1-20 (p. 6).

principate, because these prizes, too, had come into the power of *Fortuna.* Hence followed, one could say, the depreciation of such kind of rewards. Instead, the constant pursuit of *virtus* was thought to have its reward in itself, namely it provided the true happy life, which remained independent of the fluctuations of external circumstances.[64] Self-respect and the sense of having done one's duty became the new, guaranteed rewards.

Actions were now judged less by success or public approval, but more by the voice of conscience and reason.[65] An element of alienation, caused by the conflicts between the ideology of the nobility and the actual situation, has crept in. A different, more universal realm is called into being in which the traditional ideology could survive, albeit in an adapted form. Not any more society, but one's own conscience is now the decisive factor for one's deeds. A new challenge is thereby presented to *virtus*, namely the battle against *Fortuna*, and the Stoic sage can gain respect and lustre, even if he did not openly pursue this kind of reward.[66] Thus the nobleman's *dignitas*, his sense of superiority (*Stoicorum adrogantia*[67]), and the link with glory,[68] could, to some extent, be retained within Seneca's Stoic system. This certainly must have appealed to the nobility. Within a new (universal and philosophical) framework, the concept of *virtus* shifted towards a more individualistic and inward quality. The battle against the enemy (*Fortuna*) needed to be fought above all within the mind. Its range of action was further not merely limited to the traditional public service, but it included now also the private sphere. Even in exile could a man exercise his *virtus.*[69] However, *virtus* was robbed of its great impact on society through its heroic deeds. Seneca's philosophy was primarily concerned with learning how to cope with adversity, and it was therefore a philosophy for men on the defence, men beleaguered by *Fortuna.* Gerda Bush talks about Seneca's 'Tröstungen der Philosophie'.[70] The battle with *Fortuna* was in essence a

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[64] SENECA, *De vita beata* XVI.3: '"Quid ergo? Virtus ad beate vivendum sufficit?" Perfecta illa et divina quidni sufficiat, immo superfluat?' ('*"What! Does virtus alone suffice for living happily?" Perfect and divine as it is, why should it not suffice, in very truth, suffice to overflowing?*').

[65] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, pp. 112-113; see also SENECA, *Epistulae morales* LXXVIII.16: 'Nos quoque evincamus omnia, quorum praemium non corona nec palma est nec tubicen praedicationi nominis nostri silentium faciens, sed virtus et firmitas animi et pax in ceterum parta, si semel in aliquo certamine debellata fortuna est' ('*Let us too overcome all things, with our reward consisting not in any wreath or garland, not in trumpet-calls for silence for the ceremonial proclamation of our name, but in moral worth, in strength of spirit, in a peace that is won for ever once in any contest Fortuna has been utterly defeated*').

[66] Sallust's comment on Cato is revealing (*BeCa* 54.6): 'quo minus petebat gloriam eo magis illum sequebatur' ('*The less he sought fame, the more it followed him*).

[67] TACITUS, *Annales* XIV. 57.

[68] Tacitus (*Historiae* IV. 6) comments on the Stoic Helvedius: 'Quando etiam sapientibus cupido gloriae novissima exuitur' ('*The passion for glory is that from which even philosophers last divest themselves*'); cited by Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 311.

[69] H. Steinmeyer, 'Der *virtus*-Begriff bei Cicero und Seneca', *Der altsprachliche Unterricht* 17 (1975), 50-59 (p. 56).

[70] Gerda Bush 1961, p. 150; in his recent bestseller, *The Consolations of Philosophy* (Hamish Hamilton, 2000; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2001) Alain De Botton devotes an entire chapter on Seneca's instructions how to cope with frustration (pp. 73-112). A central place is thereby given to *Fortuna.* This illustrates that the issues Seneca was dealing with still have their significance in our lifetime.

process of acquiring the right attitude towards external, uncontrollable events, so that whatever *Fortuna* inflicted upon you could be accepted with an undisturbed mind.[71] Conquering *Fortuna* meant that all her assaults could be met with indifference. The emphasis is therefore laid on holding out against the machinations of *Fortuna*, and to try to anticipate her assaults, so that one could more willingly accept what she in any case will inflict upon you.[72]

One can observe in this philosophy Seneca's realistic and experienced view on Roman politics. The position of the *princeps* was such that many whimsicalities needed to be patiently endured since one lacked the power to oppose or contravene his decisions. Resistance was futile, even dangerous, not only for oneself, but also for the future of Rome, since there seemed no alternative available.[73] Gerda Bush conveniently places at the end of her article the arbitrariness of the *princeps* next to the power of *Fortuna*:

> Hier spricht die Lebenserfahrung eines Menschen, den die Philosophie gelehrt hatte, gegen die lebensbedrohende Willkür der Machthaber und die Macht der *Fortuna* die Kraft seines Geistes einzusetzen. Senecas beständiges Ringen um die Entmachtung der *Fortuna* ist auch exemplarisch.[74]

Also the aforementioned passage of *De clementia* (I.2) supposes a close tie between these two forces, seeing that the *princeps* controls the power of *Fortuna*.

Seneca's recommendation how to face life's universal troubles cannot but have its implications for the way the Roman nobility should face the consequences of the *princeps*' power:

> Optimum est pati quod emendare non possis, et deum quo auctore cuncta proveniunt sine murmuratione comitari: malus miles est qui imperatorem gemens sequitur'[75]
>
> *One can do nothing better than endure what cannot be altered and attend uncomplainingly the deity at whose instance all things come about: It is a poor soldier that follows his general grumbling.*

The question is, in the end was the 'Stoic' reward of *virtus* a sufficient enough incentive for the nobility to make the effort to serve the existing *respublica* (read: principate) willingly. Engaging in public affairs meant having to face greater hazards and a fiercer *Fortuna*, while the usual rewards of honours and glory had become very uncertain. Stoic philosophy provided at least Seneca with the necessary mental support to participate in public service, and to allow *Fortuna* to attack him vehemently. He seemed to have had little control over his own career, which is clearly visible in his later life when in vain he attempted to withdraw

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[71] N.T. Pratt, 'The Stoic Base of Senecan Drama', *TAPA* 79 (1948) 2-11 (p. 4): 'The essential purpose of Stoicism ... [is] to provide protection against the experience of suffering evil, which is the subject of the Senecan philosophical essays as a whole'.

[72] Gerda Bush 1961, p. 150.

[73] About Seneca's view on the so-called Stoic opposition, see below.

[74] Gerda Bush 1961, p. 154.

[75] SENECA, *Epistulae morales* CVII. 9.

from politics. The loss of freedom in the principate, which was so much regretted by the nobility, had also its impact on Seneca's thinking. He emphasises the requirement not to become a slave of *Fortuna*[76] or of the deity,[77] but to accept everything that comes willingly, since we all are swept along with the universe.[78] With Seneca, maybe for the first time in Roman history, the importance of *voluntas* crops up.[79] The more convincing the reasoning behind the system as a whole was, the greater appeal the new ideology could exert. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz writes that Stoicism was a kind of religion, with its 'precepts for life based on a coherent system of belief'.[80] The main difficulties in defending their system pertained to the idea of *fatum*.

## 1.2. *Fatum* (the Causal Order) and Related Issues

One of the basic principles of Stoic order was that all the events in the universe were connected with each other by the strict rules of causation, which formed as it were an invisible, ordered web structure.[81] *Fatum* was the name for this interrelated and unbroken nexus of causes that carried out the vast natural process in the universe. Nothing escaped the causal order,[82] so that theoretically there could be no room for the workings of *Fortuna*,[83] who brought about events which did not seem to have any cause, but which happened by pure chance.[84] She was regarded to be responsible for the chaos and disorder in human affairs: 'res humanas ordine nullo Fortuna regit'.[85] Acknowledging the reality of the power of *Fortuna* in daily life throws doubt upon any postulation of order, and puts therefore the whole Stoic system at risk. Seneca's frequent use of *Fortuna* in his writings[86] does not mean

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[76] 'Quicquid fieri potuit, potest, nos modo purgemu animum sequamurque naturam, a qua aberranti cupiendum' (*Epistulae morales* XCVIII.14).

[77] SENECA, *De prov.* V.7: 'nec servio deo sed assentior'.

[78] SENECA, *De prov.* V.8: 'Grande solacium est cum universo rapi' ('*It is a great consolation that it is together with the universe we are swept along*').

[79] N.W. Gilbert, 'The Will in Latin Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1 (1963), 17-35 (p. 25).

[80] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 113.

[81] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 542. Cf. SENECA, *Ad Helviam matrem: De consolatione* VIII. 3: 'inmutabilis causarum inter se cohaerentium series'; SENECA, *De beneficiis* IV.vii.2: 'series implexa causarum'.

[82] SENECA, *De prov.* V. 7: 'Causa pendet ex causa, privata ac publica longus ordo rerum trahit' ('*Cause is linked with cause, and all public and private issues are directed by a long sequence of events*'); N.T. Pratt, *Seneca's Drama* (North Carolina: 1983), p. 48.

[83] Tirso Alesanco, 'Libertad, providencia y Fortuna, en Séneca', *Augustinus* 40 (1966), 433-452 (p. 441): 'En el universo racionalizado de Séneca, el azar es inconcebible y absurdo'.

[84] This particular meaning of *Fortuna* is well brought forth by A. De Botton (2000, p. 92): 'The goddess of Fortune, in spite of her unphilosophical, religious roots, was the perfect image to keep our exposure to accident continually within our minds, conflating a range of threats to our security into one ghastly anthropomorphic enemy'.

[85] '*Fortuna governs the human affairs without any order*' (SENECA, *Phaedra* 978-979).

[86] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 542: 'In Seneca, references to fortuna are perhaps more numerous and worked out in more detail than in any major Roman writer'.

that he questioned the scope of *fatum*'s sphere of action.[87] He rather used the word because it was an established name for the seemingly random events in life.[88] These events often appear to be unjust to the ones affected by them, because *Fortuna* does not distribute her goods according to what each man deserved.[89]

### 1.2.1. The Stoic Solution for the Problem of Theodicy

One of the main problems concerning the Stoic idea of *fatum* is how it is possible that evil can befall good men. This could be easily explained with the concept of an amoral *Fortuna*, who distributes her goods randomly, and therefore without any regard for merit. When one accepts, however, the existence of an order brought about by a benevolent deity, then one needs to account for the many injustices that happen in the world. *Fatum* was, according to the Stoics, the rational chain of causes, a structure which does not automatically possess a moral dimension.

Etymologically derived from *fari* ("to speak"), *fatum*, however, meant also the good will of the deity in its temporal process.[90] The Stoic deity, unlike the gods of the Epicureans, is concerned with human affairs. His goodness, wisdom, and benevolence match the rationality and order of the cosmos.[91] Although the old Stoa rejected the ancient Roman gods, later adherents were more accepting of this essential part of Roman tradition: they often identified the Stoic deity with Jupiter,[92] while other gods and heroes were ascribed to different levels of Stoic divinity.[93] They further allegorised the divinities and myths, so that a *modus vivendi* was achieved with popular religion.[94]

It is within his moral treatise *De providentia* that Seneca tries to answer the question: 'Quare aliqua incommoda bonis viris accidant, cum providentia sit'[95] (*'Why some injuries befall good men, although there exists providence'*). The causal nexus in the universe was identified in the

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[87] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 31: 'Chance and accident have no place in the Stoic system'; so also T.G. Rosenmeyer, *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 66.
[88] D. & E. Henry 1985, p. 44.
[89] Justice is usually defined as 'a science distributive of dessert to each man'. See J.M. Rist, 'The Stoic Concept of Detachment', in J.M. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics*, Major Thinker Series 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 259-272 (p. 267).
[90] G. Pfliggersdorffer 1961, p. 2. He calls *fatum* the 'Schicksalspruch der Gottheit' (p.7); Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 32.
[91] The fact that the deity was not only considered to be the rational *pneuma* activating the universe, but also related to man as father to son, provided the Stoicism of Seneca with a strong religious trend (N.T. Pratt, *Seneca's Drama* (Chapell Hill (NC): University of North Carolina, 1983), p. 70).
[92] See also SENECA, *Epistle* CVII.10: 'Adloquamur Iovem, cuius gubernaculo moles ista derigitur' (*'Let us address Jupiter, whose guiding hand directs this mighty work'*). What follows is the translated prayer of Cleanthes.
[93] This is almost literally taken from N.T. Pratt 1983, p. 52.
[94] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 33.
[95] This sentence is the title of the treatise.

Stoic system both with *fatum* and *providentia*.[96] The latter concept highlighted that there was a divine plan behind the order, which was 'the product of divine personality'.[97]

### 1. Everything has a Cause, and Belongs to *Fatum*

First of all, Seneca illustrates in this work that every event, however random and chaotic it might seem, has a cause, and belongs to the providential order in the universe.[98] From the case of the regular revolutions of the heavens (I.2), he is convinced that also seemingly irregular and undetermined phenomena on earth, such as showers, thunderbolts and earthquakes do not happen without reason (*sine ratione*), but have their own causes (*suas causas*) (I.3). For instance, the movement of the tides of the sea, which seems to be merely blind fluctuation, is actually caused by the attraction of the moon (I.4). Accordingly, also other unexpected events do not come about by mere chance (*Fortuna*), but by a hidden cause, which man, using his reason, one day might be able to disclose.[99] However, Seneca does not elaborate this further, but he moves quickly to the real issue, since the addressee, Lucilius,[100] does not doubt the existence of providence, but complains about it: 'tu non dubitas de providentia sed quereris'.[101]

### 2. Everything What Happens Has to be Just

Everything has thus a cause. This means that the so-called 'chaotic' events, which are supposed to be ruled by *Fortuna*, actually are part of *fatum*.[102] These events also belong therefore to the deity's providence.[103] What can then be the justification for the Stoic deity, who decreed the *fata*, inflicting good men with sufferings such as poverty, wounds, painful death, exile, sickness, and public disgrace?[104] Seneca provides the reader with a 'battery of

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[96] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, pp. 31-32.

[97] N.T. Pratt 1983, p. 51; the Stoics made subtle distinctions between several concepts, which in the end needed to be identified with each other: *fatum* was what will be, *Necessitas* what must be, *providentia* what the deity foresees and assigns, and *Fortuna* what happens, seemingly at random (T.G. Rosenmeyer 1989, p. 68).

[98] Anna L. Motto & J.R. Clark, *Essays on Seneca* (Studien zur klassischen Philologie 79) (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 65-86 (p. 78).

[99] Anna L. Motto & J.R. Clark, 'The Idea of Progress in Senecan Thought', in *Essays on Seneca* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1993), pp. 21-39 (pp. 23-24): 'Seneca emphatically reminds us that the time will come when diligent study and perseverance will bring to light now what is hidden' (Reference to SENECA, *Naturales Quaestiones* VII. 25.3-5). See also J.B. Gould, 'Reason in Seneca', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 3 (1965), 13-25 (p. 15).

[100] Lucilius Junior, an old friend of Seneca, could become *eques* by his own efforts, and was later (*c.* AD 62) appointed procurator of Sicily after service in the *militia equestris* (Miriam T. Griffin 1976, p. 91).

[101] 'You do not doubt about providence, but you complain about it' (I. 4).

[102] T. Alesanco 1966, p. 434.

[103] T. Alesanco 1966, p. 448: 'La "fortuna" no es sino un instrumento del fatum y de la providentia'.

[104] SENECA, *De prov.* V.9: 'Quare tamen deus tam iniquus in distributione fati fuit, ut bonis viris paupertam et vulnera et acerba funera ascriberet?' III.2: '"Pro ipsis est," inquis, "in exilium proici, inegestatem deduci, liberos coniugem ecferre, ignominia affici, delibitari?" ' (*'"Is it," you ask, "for their own good that men are driven into exile, reduced to want, that they suffer public disgrace, and are broken in health?" '*); see also V. Cioffari *Fortune and Fate from Democritus to St. Thomas Aquinas*, diss. (New York: Columbia University, 1935), p. 51: 'The Stoic attitude is

rationalizations designed to account for the experience of evil in a beneficent universe'.[105] The deity's purpose behind '*Fortuna*' (read: *fatum*) assaulting a good man, is that he may become an exemplar to others (VI. 3),[106] since it is an opportunity for exercising and displaying his *virtus* (IV. 6), while it is also a way to make the good man stronger and better (II. 7 & IV. 16). It should be further regarded as a test of *virtus*, [107] which needs an opponent, or a challenge, anyway.[108] Adversity can thus be an opportunity to prove one's *virtus*,[109] a sign of greatness, because *Fortuna* only seeks out the bravest men to engage in battle with her (III. 4); it is therefore also a sign that God loves you: like a loving father he disciplines his son.[110] From the deity's view a 'vir fortis cum Fortuna mala compositus' is a beautiful spectacle,[111] and it can bring glory to the assailed man.[112] It is the deity's purpose, and that of the wise man as well, to show that those things which the ordinary man desires, and those which he dreads, are really neither goods nor evils. By distributing them to the basest man while withholding them from the good, the deity makes his point.[113] He cares for the good man himself, not for the good man's luggage,[114] while he has a greater concern for the good of all men than for individuals (III. 1).

### 3. The Justice behind the Accession of an Unworthy Caligula

By insisting on the justice of the universal order Seneca likewise seems to advocate a more accepting attitude towards the vicissitudes caused by the new established order in Rome. In an interesting passage he seeks to justify the deity's decision to allow degenerate men to obtain public office,[115] even to become ruler over the whole world:

> Quare [providentia] C. Caesarem orbi terrarum praeficet, hominem sanguinis humani avidissimum, quem non aliter fluere in conspectu suo iubebat, quam si ore excepturus esset?[116]

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determined by the necessity of somehow accounting for the evidence of bad luck in a providentially ruled world'.

[105] N.T. Pratt 1983, p. 54; V. Cioffari (1935, pp. 50-52) sums them up.

[106] '[viri boni] nati sunt in exemplar'; see also SENECA, *De prov.* III. 4: 'magnum exemplum nisi mala Fortuna non invenit'.

[107] SENECA, *De prov.* V. 10: 'Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes'.

[108] SENECA, *De prov.* II. 4: 'Marcet sine adversio virtus' ('*Virtus without an opponent withers away*').

[109] SENECA, *De prov.* IV. 12: 'numquam virtutis molle documentum est'.

[110] SENECA, *De prov.* IV. 7: 'Hos itaque deus quos probat, quos amat, indurat, recogniscit, exercet'.

[111] SENECA, *De prov.* II. 9.

[112] SENECA, *De prov.* III. 9: (about Regulus) 'Quanto plus tormenti tanto plus erit gloriae' ('*The greater his torture is, the greater shall be his glory*'). Here we encounter again the inclination of Stoics to seek glory by their deeds in life.

[113] SENECA, *De prov.* V. 2.

[114] SENECA, *De prov.* VI. 1: 'ipsos tuetur ac vindicat: numquid hoc quoque aliquis a deo exigit, ut bonorum virorum etiam sarcinas servet?' ('*The good men themselves he protects and delivers: does any one require of the deity that he should also guard the good men's luggage?*').

[115] SENECA, *De beneficiis* IV. xxx.1.

[116] SENECA, *De beneficiis* IV. xxxi.2.

> *Why did [providence] make Gaius Caesar the ruler of the world? – a man so greedy of human blood that he ordered it to be shed in his presence as freely as if he intended to catch the stream in his mouth!*

To place such a supposedly blatant injustice within a just order, Seneca widens the picture in which this event needs to be seen: he perceives divine justice to be operating over several generations. It is possible for an immoral person from noble descent to acquire public offices, because this is still seen as a reward for the deeds of his glorious ancestors.[117] Justice has been done to the ancestors of the unworthy man, and this in turn will stimulate men to behave virtuously, since one can see how abundantly the reward is: even after his death, his descendents will profit from his services done. So it can happen that sometimes the unworthy receive rewards in order to honour their ancestors.[118] This means that an apparently unjust situation nevertheless forms part of an all-embracing (hidden) just order. *Fortuna*, who ostensibly distributes her goods without regard for merit, behaves in a fair way after all: her random distributions form part of a higher benevolent order.

### 4. *FORTUNA* AND *FATUM*: DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE SAME EVENTS

Although Seneca ultimately identifies *Fortuna* with *fatum*, both words are not interchangeable. N.T. Pratt writes:

> *Fortuna* and Fate are virtually synonymous in Stoicism since they both denote reality. They are different only in that they are views of reality from different perspectives, *Fortuna* being the flux of the world and Fate its system.[119]

Also D. and Elisabeth Henry have a difference in perception of the same reality in mind:

> "Fate" is the term for inexorable necessity, which may seem unjust but has the majestic rightness of divine omniscience and goodness; "*Fortuna*" is used when the emphasis is on life's incomprehensible changes, on what seems fickle and insecure.[120]

Seneca uses the word *Fortuna* for those events of the causal order, which conceal their meaning and true causes for the individual affected by it, and who therefore thinks they happen by chance or by the mysterious working of the whimsical deity *Fortuna*. It is a consequence of a limited view, the insufficient knowledge of the individual, who cannot grasp the true meaning of these 'accidents' within the great sweep of the whole universe.[121]

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[117] SENECA, *De beneficiis* IV. xxx.1: 'Sacra est magnarum virtutum memoria, et esse plures bonos iuvat, si gratia bonorum non cum ipsis cadit' ('*For sacred is the memory of great virtues, and it helps more people to be good, if esteem of good men does not end with their lives.*').

[118] Seneca, *De beneficiis* IV. xxx.1: 'Aliquando daturum me etiam indignis quaedam non negaverim in honorem aliorum'.

[119] N.T. Pratt 1983, p. 111.

[120] D. & Elisabeth Henry 1985, p. 44.

[121] I. Kajanto 1985, p. 543: 'Even *incerta, fortuita, casus, fortuna* have been preordained by *fatum* or *series causarum*: only their causes are indiscernible to the human mind. ... To give a vivid expression to all the peril and hazards to which Fate submits us, he [i.e. Seneca] resorts to the familiar language of *fortuna/tyche*'; T. Alesanco 1966, p.

Seneca wants to make clear that even the accidental and unmerited events in life belong to a just and fair system of a benevolent and rational deity.[122] The existence of suffering and evil in general he attributes at one time to... matter:

> Non potest artifex mutare materiam; hoc passa est. [...] Ut efficiatur vir cum cura dicendus, fortiore fato opus est.
>
> *It is impossible for the moulder to alter matter; to this [law] it has submitted. [...] A tougher fate is needed, in order that a man be proven fit to be talked about with respect.*[123]

Also in *De providentia* VI.6 he seems to imply that it was impossible for the deity to create a world without suffering, because of this "law of matter": 'Quia non poteram vos istis subducere, animos vestros adversus omnia armavi' ('*Because I could not withdraw sorrowful things from your path, but I gave weapons to withstand them all*').

## 5. THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARDS *FATUM* (...AND THUS ALSO *FORTUNA*)

Crucial to Seneca's system is what someone's attitude is towards *fatum* and *Fortuna*. Since the wise man knows *fatum* cannot be changed[124] he has to 'praebere se fato'. This accords with Seneca's famous line, a translation of a poem of Cleanthes: 'Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt'.[125] Even the deity has to follow *fatum*: 'ille ipse omnium conditor et rector scripsit quidem fata, sed sequitur; semper paret, semel iussit'.[126]

What about *Fortuna*? Her workings ultimately can be identified with *fatum*, and thus the same attitude is needed towards her. And indeed, we can read: 'praebendi Fortunae sumus, ut contra illam ab ipsa duremur'.[127] That the same stance is expected towards her can also be found in following line, which echoes Cleanthes' verse, but then with one crucial difference:

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448: 'La "fortuna" no parece ser otra cosa que el fatum mismo en cuanto afecta de un modo particular y distinto a cada hombre singular'.

[122] T.N. Pratt 1983, p. 196: 'Men may think that evil exists in superhuman terms, but this is only because they do not understand the great rational scheme of things [...] What is more, the great scheme is identical with how things are fated to be and with how divine providence wills things to be. No, in a rational macrocosm the only source of disruption in human life is lack of reason or perversion of reason in man the microcosm'.

[123] SENECA, *De prov.* V.9; see also Evelyn Spring, 'The Problem of Evil in Seneca', *The Classical Weekly* 16 (1922), 51-53 (esp. p. 52): 'Seneca ascribes much of the evil in the world to the nature of matter itself. The advantage of this theory obviously is that, although it limits the power of God, it retains His goodness.' She further sees Orphic and Platonic elements in Seneca's attitude towards matter.

[124] SENECA, *De prov.* V.8: 'Irrevocabilis humana pariter ac divina cursus vehit' ('*One unchangeable course bears along the affairs of men and gods alike*'); so also *Epistulae* LXXVII.12: 'Series invicta et nulla mutabilis ope inligavit ac trahit cuncta' ('*There is no means of altering the irresistible succession of events which carries all things in its binding grip*').

[125] SENECA, *Epistulae* CVII.11. Augustine will quote Seneca's translation of this poem in *De civitate Dei* (v. 8), to indicate what the Stoics mean with *fatum*.

[126] SENECA, *De prov.* V. 8: '*Although the great creator and ruler of the universe himself wrote the decrees of fatum, yet he follows them. He obeys forever, he decreed but once*'.

[127] SENECA, *De prov.* IV. 12: '*We should offer ourselves to Fortuna in order that, struggling with her, we may be hardened by her*'.

'bono viri ... non trahuntur a Fortuna, sequuntur illam et aequant gradus'.[128] This time, it is *Fortuna* whom one should follow willingly.[129]

## 1.2.2. Free Will and Servitudo

### 1. How to Safeguard Free Will in a Deterministic World

Another problem that arises from the idea that *fatum* is an inexorable chain of causes from which nothing escapes, is that such a view seems to deny free will.[130] The Stoa made the law of causation an absolute rule, which inevitably implied determinism.[131] A determined world seems to leave no space at all for man's free decisions:[132]

> qui introducunt causarum seriem sempiternam, ei mentem hominis voluntate libera spoliatam necessitate fati devinciunt.[133]
>
> *those who bring in an everlasting series of causes rob the human mind of free will and fetter it in the chains of a fated necessity.*

This in turn would preclude the notion of moral responsibility, an idea necessary for any ethical teaching.[134]

### 2. Chrysippus' Solution: the Rolling Cylinder

The Stoic Chrysippus sought to maintain the inescapability and universality of *fatum*, while nevertheless keeping it at bay from the idea of necessity. In his argumentation, he came up with an ingenious analysis of the types of causes, which he illustrated through the metaphor of a rolling cylinder.[135] He argued that there are on the one hand 'perfect and primary'

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[128] SENECA, *De prov.* V. 4: '*Good men are not dragged by Fortuna, they follow her, and match her pace*'.

[129] S. Scheinberg (*Labor and Fortuna in Virgil's Aeneid*, diss. (Cambridge (U.S.A.): Harvard University, 1981), p. 182) states, after having quoted Seneca's translated line from Cleanthes: 'A Stoic would not, on the other hand, try to follow *Fortuna*'. I think that *De prov.* V. 4 shows that it is too crude an assumption that one has to follow *fatum*, and resist *Fortuna*; see also T. Alesanco 1966, p. 452: 'Al acomodarse y aceptar la "fortuna", el hombre se acomoda y acepta el *fatum* y la providencia'.

[130] B. Berofsky, s.v. 'Free Will and Determinism', in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* 2 (New York, 1973), pp. 236-242 (p. 237). A good discussion of the issue is provided by A.A. Long, 'Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action', in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. by A.A. Long (London: Athlone Press, 1971), pp. 173-199; T. Alesanco 1966, 433-452; Charlotte Stough, 'Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility', in *The Stoics*, ed. by J.M. Rist, Major Thinker Series 1, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 203-231.

[131] T.G. Rosenmeyer, *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 68.

[132] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 35: 'The idea that nothing escapes the causal nexus uniting all events in the universe raises the question of human free will. Given the determinism of the Stoics' world order and its identification with divine providence, in what sense can man be free?' This was intolerable for the Epicureans, and in order to maintain the notion of free will, they took refuge in accepting the existence of an uncaused movement, namely the spontaneous swerve of atoms.

[133] CICERO, *De fato* IX. 20.

[134] P.J. Davis, 'Fate and Human Responsibility in Seneca's Oedipus', *Latomus* 50 (1991), 150-163 (p. 161); Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 35: 'Free will is an absolute necessity to the Stoic philosophy. Not only is it the sole source of evil, but it is essential if the ethics of the Stoics is to work at all'; so also N.T. Pratt 1983, p. 49: 'the ethical aims of the [Stoic] school are very strong, and for a significant ethic the human will must be meaningfully free to act'.

[135] For a comprehensive discussion, see Charlotte Stough 1978, 203-231.

causes, and on the other hand 'auxiliary and proximate' causes. The push against a cylinder is only an 'auxiliary and proximate' cause, so that it can roll away, but the power of the rolling is within the nature of the cylinder itself, more specifically in its shape, which is the 'perfect and primary cause' for its moving. Likewise, a sense-impression that strikes us is only an 'auxiliary cause'. It is our nature which is the 'perfect and primary' cause for the way we assent to that impression.[136] It can then be admitted that there is still an antecedent cause needed for our actions - a cause firmly linked with the eternal chain of causation -, but this is only an auxiliary cause.

Chrysippus suggests thus that our own character is part-cause of our actions. There is a part attributable to us, so that moral responsibility for our actions could be preserved. The question that follows is then: how is our character formed? Here, no doubt, he would have said: it is determined through the hereditary factor and our environment, so that in the end our character, too, is fated.[137] Chrysippus did therefore not try to exempt human actions on the whole from determinism.[138] N.T. Pratt concludes: 'It is apparent that they [*sc.* Stoics] valued the stability and security of an ordered system more than uncontrolled freedom of the will'.[139]

### 3. The Relevance of the Issue of Free Will in the Principate

This very limited view on human freedom of Stoicism corresponded very well with the actual situation of the nobility in the new regime. It was generally recognized that the principate had brought about the end of a *libertas* the nobility once had enjoyed in the traditional *respublica.* Their freedom had been sacrificed in favour of the stability of the Roman order, so that one could apply the previous words of N.T. Pratt to the attitude required from the nobility: it is apparent that they [*sc.* the nobility] *should* value the stability and security of an ordered system [*sc.* principate] more than uncontrolled freedom of the will [their traditional *libertas* in a traditional *respublica*].

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[136] Charlotte Stough 1978, pp. 218-219: 'What a person does will depend on which presentation he assents to, and the assent given to sensory presentations will be a function of his own individual "nature", his own personality and character'.

[137] C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 50; Charlotte Stough 1978, p. 182; A.A. Long, 'Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action', in A.A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London: The Athlone Press, 1971), pp. 173-199 (p. 187): 'The individual's character, which prompts his behaviour, is also determined since it follows from his particular nature and upbringing. Hence the causal sequence which finally issues in an act of will can be traced back both to the environment and to the nature given at birth'; see also N.T. Pratt 1983, p. 49.

[138] R.W. Sharples 'Causes and Necessary Conditions in the *Topica* and *De Fato*', in J.G.F. Powell (ed.), *Cicero the Philosopher: Twelve Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 247-271 (p. 255); Charlotte Stough 1978, p. 187.

[139] N.T. Pratt 1983, p. 49.

That Seneca was perhaps the first to import *voluntas*, an understanding of the contribution of the will, into the Stoic debate,[140] might well be a consequence of the importance of *libertas* in the ideology of the *respublica*. Man was according to Seneca free to follow *fatum*, and if he did not freely want to follow it, he would nevertheless be dragged by it. The task of the wise man is to tune his *voluntas* to what *fatum* dictates, and this attitude will save him a lot of sorrow and frustration.[141] The concept of *voluntas* will only be fully developed by Augustine.

## 1.2.3. Divination

### 1. *Συμπάθεια* AND THE POSSIBILITY OF DIVINATION

The Stoics argued for the reality of close-knit relationships between all things in nature, not only because they all formed part of the causal nexus, but also because the whole universe was saturated with *pneuma* (a mixture of water and fire). One of the consequences of this theory was that there existed a *συμπάθεια* among all things, which is reflected in a harmony and interaction among the parts of the universe, which included a correspondence between the human microcosm and the universal macrocosm.[142] The universe was looked upon as one huge living and feeling organism, and certain natural phenomena could therefore be regarded as signs and portents of developments in human affairs.[143] This provided a rational explanation for the traditional practice of divination, or, to say it with the words of N.T. Pratt: 'omens become pointers to the working of the causal nexus'.[144]

### 2. DIVINATION QUESTIONED IN CICERO'S *DE DIVINATIONE*

Cicero's first book of *De divinatione* provides us with a Stoic defence of the practice of foretelling, delivered by Quintus. The second part of the work contains the critique of Cotta, who is a member of the Sceptic academic school. He frequently resorts to the

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[140] T.G. Rosenmeyer, *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 76, referring to the study of M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa: Geschichte einer gesistigen Bewegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1948-1949), p. 319; N.W. Gilbert, 'The Will in Latin Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1 (1963) 17-35 (p. 25). The author emphasises however that reason is still the deciding factor in moral action (p. 28).

[141] In the words of Demetrius (SENECA, *De prov.* V. 6): 'A volente feretis quicquid petieris' ('*With my free consent you shall have whatever you may ask of me*').

[142] N.T. Pratt 1983, pp. 47-48; Marcia L. Colisch 1985, I, p. 33.

[143] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 36.

[144] N.T. Pratt 1983, p. 49; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (1979, p. 38) sees a modification of the traditional idea of divination through Stoic ideas: because of the rigidity of *fatum* omens become indications of the inevitable, instead of pointers of future events which still could be averted.

indeterminism of chance events to disprove the reasoning of the Stoics.[145] In the introduction Cicero gives two kinds of divination: the one based on *ars* (skill), the other on *natura* (nature).[146] Among those almost entirely depending on *ars* he includes *sortes* (casting of lots) and astrology, which are important to present study for various reasons. Dreams and predictions made in a "frenzy" (*vaticinatio*) are examples of divination by 'natura'.[147] Of these Quintus argues that not the causes but the results need to be examined.

> Est enim vis et natura quaedam, quae tum observatis longo tempore significantionibus, tum aliquo instinctu inflatuque divino futura praenuntiat.[148]
>
> *For there is a certain power and nature, which, through long-continued observation of signs and also through some instinct and divine inspiration, makes prophetic announcements of the future.*

The Stoic Quintus agrees with Cicero's overall division of divination, and he, too, excludes the casting of lots from the second group without explicitly putting them in the group of divination by skill.[149]

Quintus' definition of divination reveals what appears to stand at the heart of the problem, namely the conception of chance: 'id est de divinatione, quae est earum rerum quae fortuitae putantur praedictio atque praesensio' (*'this is about divination, which is the foretelling and foreboding of those events considered to be accidental'*).[150] Later, the shrewd Cotta will slightly modify this definition to a more easily refutable version: '...eamque ita definire: "divinationem esse earum rerum praedictionem et praesensionem, quae essent fortuitae"' (*'...to define it as follows: divination is the foretelling and foreboding of those events which are accidental'*).[151]

A little further he states:

> Talium ergo rerum, quae in Fortuna positae sunt, praesensio divinatio est. Potestne igitur earum rerum, quae nihil habent rationis quare futurae sint, esse ulla praesensio? quid est enim aliud fors, quid fortuna, quid casus, quid eventus, nisi cum sic aliquid cecidit, sic evenit, ut vel non cadere atque evenire ut vel aliter cadere atque evenire potuerit? Quo modo ergo id, quod temere fit caeco casu et volubilitate Fortunae, praesentiri et praedici potest?[152]
>
> *Divination is the foreboding of such events, which are placed in the hands of Fortuna. Can there, then, be any foreboding of things for whose happening no reason exists? For we do not apply the words "chance", "luck", "accident" or "casuality" except to an event which has so occurred or happened that it either might not have occurred at all, or might have occurred in another way. How, then, is it possible*

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145 Cicero's own position on the theoretical validity of divination, being a member of the augural college, must have been less sceptical than the one he wrote down in book II. See Mary Beard, 'Cicero and Divination: The Formation of a Latin Discourse', *Journal of Roman Studies* 76 (1986), 33-46 (p. 43).

146 CICERO, *De div.* I. vi (11): 'Duo sunt enim divinandi genera, quorum alterum artis est, alterum naturae'.

147 The refinement seems to have come from Posidonius, who argued that divination was 'made possible not only because of the objective correspondences between different parts of the universe but also on the basis of the seer's subjective receptivity' (Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 33).

148 CICERO, *De div.* I. vi (12).

149 CICERO, *De div.* I. xviii (34).

150 CICERO, *De div.* I. v (9).

151 CICERO, *De div.* II. v (13).

152 CICERO, *De div.* II. vi (15).

*to perceive in advance and to predict an event that happens at random, as the result of blind accident, and by the fickleness of Fortuna?*[153]

Many of Cotta's arguments are based on his conveniently altered definition of divination. For instance, he argues that God's omniscience cannot be maintained if one allows for chance events.

> Nihil enim est tam contrarium rationi et constantiae quam Fortuna, ut mihi ne in deum quidem cadere videatur, ut sciat, quid casu et fortuito futurum sit.[154]
>
> *Nothing is so at variance with reason and stability as Fortuna. Hence it seems to me that it is not in the power even of God himself to know what event is going to happen accidentally and by chance.*

However, according to the Stoics pure chance does ultimately not exist, because it, too, belongs to *fatum*. Quintus' definition of divination indeed did not concern real chance events, but events 'quae putantur fortuitae' (*'thought to be happening by chance'*). Cotta's criticism is therefore not applicable to Quintus' definition. To make things even more peculiar, Cotta is now urging Quintus to change his definition of divination, which he wrongly takes to be 'praesensionem rerum fortuitarum'![155]

### 3. The oracle of *Fortuna Primigenia* at Praeneste

One of the methods of divination mentioned is the casting of lots, and this brings us back to the *Fortuna* at Praeneste:

> Est ipsa sors contemnenda non est, si auctoritatem habet vetustatis, ut eae sunt sortes, quas e terra editas accepimus; quae tamen ductae ut in rem apte cadant, fieri credo posse divinitus; quorum omnium interpretes, ut grammatici poetarum, proxime ad eorum, quos interpretantur, divinationem videntur accedere.[156]
>
> *Although divination by lot is not in itself to be despised, if it has the sanction of antiquity, as in the case of those lots which, according to tradition, sprang out of the earth; for in spite of everything, I am inclined to think that they may, under the power of God, be so drawn as to give an apposite response. Men capable of correctly interpreting all these signs seem to approach very near to the divine spirit of those, whose interpreters they are, just as scholars do when they interpret the poets.*

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[153] Interestingly, Tacitus (*Historiae* IV. 26) provides us with a reason why certain accidental events (like in this case a drought) are sometimes considered to be prodigies and belonging to *fatum* (or the wrath of the gods), while at other times they are taken to be merely the result of chance (*fors*) or nature: 'Apud imperitos prodigii loco acciebatur ipsa aquarum penuria, tamquam nos amnes quoque et vetera imperii munimenta desererent: quod in pace fors seu natura, tunc fatum et ira deorum vocabatur' (*'Among ignorant minds the very shortage of water was being used as an instance of a portent, as if also the rivers on which the empire had so long relied for defence were now deserting us. What in time of peace might have been attributed to chance or natural causes, was now called 'fatum' and 'the wrath of the gods'*). The heightened uncertainty and anguish of people during wartime made them more predisposed to see an omen behind unusual events (The reference is taken from J. Kroymann, 'Fatum, fors, Fortuna im Geschichtsdenken des Tacitus', in V. Pöschl (ed.), *Tacitus*, Wege der Forschung 97 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), pp. 130-160 (p. 134)).

[154] CICERO, *De div.* II. vii (18).

[155] CICERO, *De div.* II. vii (19). It is not easy to make sense of this difference in definition throughout the work. Clearly, Quintus had from the beginning circumvented this kind of criticism by taking divination to mean: 'praesensionem rerum quae putantur fortuitae'.

[156] CICERO, *De div.* I. xviii (34).

*'The lots which sprang out of the earth'* is a reference to the wooden tablets with ancient inscription on it, allegedly found at Praeneste. The working of the oracle is a combination of a seemingly chance event - the drawing of precisely that lot relevant to the situation of the consultant - and the skill of the man who interprets the words written on the drawn tablet.[157] Cotta puts the casting of lots together with playing *mora*, dice, and knucklebones, in which *temeritas* and *casus* prevail, not *ratio* or *consilium*.[158] He further tells us that, anyway, the casting of lots have gone entirely out of use and could therefore be safely dismissed.

### 1.2.4. Astrology

T. Barton wrote: 'It is hardly an accident that the rise of astrology coincides with the fall of the Republic'.[159] Several factors contributed to the success of astrology around the period of the changeover from *respublica* to principate, despite the criticism of intellectuals such as Cicero, who in his *De divinatione* (II. (42-48)) refuted the claims of astrology with the "twin argument".[160] There was, for instance, the decline of the traditional Roman religion, and the rise of Stoicism. Its doctrine of *συμπάθεια* that existed in the universe, made a connection between heavenly stars and human affairs more conceivable, and it explained the practice of divination in general.[161] Seneca, too, provided in his consolation letter to Marcia[162] a scientific base to believe in the principle of astrology:

> videbis quinque sidera diversas agentia vias et in contrarium praecipiti mundo nitentia: ex horum levissimis motibus fortunae populorum dependent et maxima ac minima proinde formantur, prout aequum iniquumve sidus incessit.[163]
>
> *You will see the five planets*[164] *pursuing their different courses and striving to stem the headlong whirl of heaven; on even the slightest motions of these hang the fortunes of nations, and the greatest and smallest happenings are shaped to accord with the progress of a kindly or unkindly star.*

There was further the interest in astronomy from Alexandrian poets, such as Aratus who wrote the influential didactic poem *Phaenomena*, which was translated into Latin by

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157 This second part leaves some control to man, so that he could conveniently understand the ancient words only to reveal an even more appropriate oracle.

158 CICERO, *De div.* I. XLI (85): 'Quid enim sors est? Idem prope modum quod micare, quod talos iacere, quod tesseras, quibus in rebus temeritas et casus, non ratio nec consilium valet'.

159 T.S. Barton, *Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine under the Roman Empire* (Michigan: Harbor, 1994), p. 38.

160 Twins, who have the same birth time, and therefore the same birth chart, often lead completely different lives. The twin argument will be of paramount importance in Augustine's repudiation of astrology, and his view on God's providence.

161 See Cicero, *De div.* book I; Marcia L. Colish (1985, I, p. 33) points out that not all Stoics accepted divination, for instance, Epictetus and Panaetius did not. J. Lacroix (1951, p. 256) writes: L'astrologie et l'établissement des horoscopes étaient justifiés par une grande secte philosophique, celle des Stoïciens'.

162 One has to be careful not to see in this passage Seneca's own attitude towards astrology. Marcia was an important noble lady, and Seneca must have written this letter to please her, so that the passage rather indicates that the addressee believed in astrology.

163 SENECA, *De consolatione ad Marciam* XVIII. 3.

164 These are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

Cicero. Several of these factors come together in the life of Posidonius (135 - 51 BC), who, according to F. Cumont, was a key figure for the triumph of astrology in the Roman world.[165] Not only was he a Stoic, he also wrote five books on astrology, and stood up for its veracity by citing the influence of the phases of the moon on the tides of the sea.[166]

### 1. ASTROLOGY: JUSTIFICATION FOR UNPRECEDENTED ACCUMULATION OF POWER

T.S. Barton is probably right to highlight one other reason for the success of this science in Rome in the upper stratum: astrology was also used as justification for some leading individuals to justify their extraordinary position of power, which fell outside the traditional (republican) institutions.[167] The catalyst was Augustus, who exploited this avenue to the full in the justification of his unique status as *primus inter pares.* He made public his propitious astrological birth chart, issued coins with his birth sign (the Capricorn) depicted on it, and the Augustan poets followed suit in this fascination with the stars.[168] This new kind of divination rapidly gained prominence during the reign of Augustus, and the consultation of astrologers for everyday matters soon became common practice among the Romans.[169] The success of astrology can also be witnessed in the fact that people started to name the days after the planets Saturn, the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus.[170] This custom was later officially adopted by the Christian(!) emperor Constantine in 321 AD.[171]

Of course, the emperor's ideological use of astrology to consolidate his position had also a downside: its outcome and practice were difficult to control, so that it either could be used against him, or in support of the ambition of a personal rival, who had a very promising horoscope.[172] The emperors therefore frequently issued edicts forbidding consultations about death or those without witnesses.[173]

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165 F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (New York & London: Putnam, 1912), p. 85. T. Barton (1994) modified his importance.

166 J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford, Oxord Univesity Press, 1979), p.121; POSIDONIUS, fr.85; see also Cicero, *De div.* II. xiv.34: 'Quid de fretis aut de marinis aestibus plura dicam, quorum accessus et recessus lunae motu gubernantur?' ('*What shall I say further about the seas and straits with their tides, whose ebb and flow are governed by the motion of the moon?*'). Of course, the connection perceived between the regular movements of the constellations and the annual cycle of the seasons, helped to promote the basic principle of astrology that man's fate was somehow connected with the position of the stars.

167 T.S. Barton 1994.

168 Notably Virgil in the proem of his *Georgics.*

169 J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, pp. 122-123.

170 G.J. Whithrow, *Time in History. Views of Time from Prehistory to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 68.

171 In the past, Christians had been following the Jewish custom in numbering, not naming the days of the week (See G.J. Whithrow 1989, p. 69). As a bishop, Augustine would try in vain to dissuade his flock from using the planetary names for the days of the week (H. Chadwick, 'Augustine on Pagans and Christians: Reflections on Religious and Social Change', in J. Dunn & I. Harris (eds.), *Augustine*, II (Cheltenham: Elgar, 1997), pp. 196-214 (p. 211), referring to *Ennarationes in psalmos* 93.3).

172 This can also work both ways: Nero, Tiberius and Caracalla disposed of many rivals solely on the grounds of their horoscope, because, for instance, they were, according to their constellation, hostile towards them. See

## 2. Order and assurance within an unpredictable environment

Astrology could offer the Roman nobility a distinguished worldview that compensated for the severe blow their *dignitas* had received through the establishment of the principate, in which they had lost most of the real political control over the *respublica*.[174] It could still validate their superiority within society, at a time when it was impossible for them to perform great deeds by which they used to justify their privileged status.[175] With astrology the individual gained prominence, and the society as a whole receded into the background. Believers were provided with very practical answers to issues concerning where one's place was within the greater picture of the universe. This also could provide the nobility with a practical guidance, at a time when they were somewhat out of place in the new regime.

Finally, astral fate could much better account for the unpredictable and often unjust events in one's life. Despite the acceptance of an all-embracing, superimposed order (read also: Roman order), nevertheless, there occurred many unjust and unpredictable events in one's personal life. One of the great differences between astral fate and Stoic *fatum* was that its fatalism was the more threatening, because the order laid bare by astrologers was not necessarily as benign as the Stoic *fatum*. Making one's moment of birth, something one has not under control, the only factor that decides one's life, seems indeed unjust, and reflects an order that is intrinsically unfair. One can regard therefore astral fate as a kind of mixture of Stoic *fatum* and the workings of *Fortuna*. With the Stoic *fatum* it shares a deterministic order, based on the causal principle, and with *Fortuna* it has in common the meaninglessness and the ability to account for injustices, since it, too, has no regard for personal merit.

## 3. Stoic *Fatum*, astral fate and *Fortuna*

A good example of the difference between Stoic *fatum* and astrological fate can be found in an important and much discussed passage of Tacitus, which is worth citing in full.

> Sed mihi haec ac talia audienti in incerto iudicium est fatone res mortalium et necessitate immutabili an forte volvantur. quippe sapientissimos veterum quique sectam eorum aemulantur diversos reperies, ac multis insitam opinionem non initia nostri, non finem, non denique homines dis curae; ideo creberrime tristia in bonos, laeta apud deteriores esse. contra alii fatum quidem congruere rebus putant, sed non e vagis stellis,

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E. Hendrickx, 'Astrologie, waarzeggerij en parapsychologie bij Augustinus', *Annalen van het Thijmgenootschap* 44 (1956), 325-352 (p. 327).

[173] T.S. Barton 1994, p. 54; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (1979, p. 125) argues that since the new institution of the principate, revolution was necessary to cause a change in political affairs, which compelled the activist to get as much support, human and supernatural as possible.

[174] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 125.

[175] It was maybe also more natural for the nobility to believe in astrology, because their superior position was after all grounded on having aristocratic ancestors. "Place" of birth decided already for many whether you would become a nobleman or not, so that it was a relatively small step to think that the time of birth was equally important.

> verum apud principia et nexus naturalium causarum; ac tamen electionem vitae nobis relinquunt, quam ubi elegeris, certum imminentium ordinem. meque mala vel bona quae vulgus putet: multos qui conflictari adversis videantur beatos, at plerosque quamquam magnas per opes miserrimus, si illi gravem fortunam constanter tolerant, hi prospera inconsulte utantur. ceterum plurimus mortalium non eximitur quin primo cuiusque ortu ventura destinentur, sed quaedam secus quam dicta sint cadere fallacies ignara dicentium: ita corrumpi fidem artis cuius clara documenta et antiqua aetas et nostra tulerit.[176]
>
> *When I hear this and similar stories I feel uncertain whether human affairs are directed by Fate's unalterable necessity – or by chance. On this question the wisest ancient thinkers and their disciples differ. Many insist that heaven is unconcerned with our births and deaths, in fact, with human beings – so that the good often suffer, and the wicked prosper. Others disagree, maintaining that although things happen according to fate, this depends not on astral movements but on the principles and logic of natural causality. This school leaves us free to choose our lives. But once the choice is made, they warn that the future sequence of events is immutable. Yet in regard to those events they claim that the popular ideas of good and evil are mistaken: many who seem afflicted are happy, if they endure their hardships courageously; others (however wealthy) are wretched if they employ their prosperity unwisely. Most men, however, find it natural to believe that lives are predestined from birth, that the science of prophecy is verified by remarkable testimonials, ancient and modern; and that unfulfilled predictions are due merely to ignorant impostors who discredit it.*

It is clear that the first group of philosophers are the Epicureans, who claim that the gods do not care for human beings, and believe in the existence of pure chance events. The second group are the Stoics, but not those who believe in astrology. Tacitus' careful distinction between Stoics and astrologers is striking. Finally, he remarks that many believe in the predictions made by, we can supplement, astrologers (*mathematici* in Latin), among whom are many impostors. The fact that this passage is framed in between two fulfilled predictions from astrologers, reveals that Tacitus does not so much deny the possibility of foretelling one's future by reading the stars, but that he has his doubts concerning the predictions made, because of the incompetence and deception of some astrologers.

The historian Ammianus Marcellinus confirms the widespread belief in astrology among the Roman nobility in the fourth century.

> Multi apud eos negantes esse superas potestates in caelo, nec in publicum prodeunt nec prandent nec lavari arbitrantur se cautius posse, antequam ephemeride srupulose sciscitata didicerint, ubi sit verbi gratia signum Mercurii, vel quotam Cancri, sideris partem polum discurrens obstineat luna.[177]
>
> *Many of them [=many of the nobility], who deny that there are higher powers in heaven, neither appear in public nor eat a meal nor think they can with due caution take a bath, until they have critically*

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[176] TACITUS, *Annales* VI. 22. This passage has been already thoroughly studied notably by W. Theiler, 'Tacitus und die antike Schicksalslehre', in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühll zum 60. Geburtstag am 1. August 1945* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1946), pp. 35-90. He frequently refers to the later ideas of Augustine about the topics treated, so that it is a very interesting article for this thesis. See also W. Wimmel, 'Roms Schicksal im Eingang der taciteischen Annalen', *Antike und Abendland* 10 (1961), 35-52; J. Lacroix, 'Fatum et Fortuna dans l'œuvre de Tacite', *Revue des études latines* 29 (247-264); J. Kroymann, 'Fatum, fors, Fortuna und verwandtes im Geschichtsdenken des Tacitus', in V. Pöschl (ed.), *Tacitus*, Wege der Forschung 97 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), pp. 130-160.

[177] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXVIII.4 (24).

*examined the calendar, and learned where, for example, the planet Mercury is, or what degree of the constellation of the Crab the moon occupies in its course through the heavens.*

We do not need to look too far for further evidence on the fascination of astrology in Augustine's age: he himself had been captivated by this (pseudo-)science/religion for a lengthy period.[178] Then, the meaning of *fatum* had become narrowed down to denote above all astral fate (*vis positionis siderum*), which is illustrative for the dominant place of astrology in the Roman world.[179] That even *Fortuna* suffers from the popularity of astrology can be seen in Augustine's letter to Lampadius, wherein he, concerning the question on *Fortuna* and *fatum*, almost exclusively deals with astral fate.

## 1.3. Stoic Resistance

### 1.3.1. An Iniquitous fatum: The Justice of the New Order Questioned in Lucan's *Pharsalia*

#### 1. THE TENOR OF *PHARSALIA*

This brief section deals with Lucan's epic work *Pharsalia* (also sometimes titled *Bellum civile*). B.M. Marti offers two possible political meanings behind the poem: either the eulogy on Nero in the prologue (I.33-45) is sincere, and then we can still expect in the missing part of the epic a 'final vision' in which the divine power unites mankind under the *princeps* Nero. All the suffering and carnage of the civil war would then be part of the ordered destiny of the world.[180] Or else - and this is more likely - the eulogy is ironical and sarcastic, so that the poem becomes a veiled attack on the *princeps* who is behaving as a tyrant, and enslaves the Roman people.[181]

Lucan's work has already received considerable attention from J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, in a section headed: 'The system rejected: Lucan's *Pharsalia*'.[182] The moderate Stoic view of Seneca supported the acceptance with equanimity of the negative consequences of the new order: it formed part of an inexorable *fatum*, and belonged thus to an ultimately just order.

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[178] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* IV.iii (4) & VII.vi (8).

[179] AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* V.1: Id [=fatum] homines quando audiunt, usitata loquendi consuetudine non intellegunt, nisi vim positionis siderum qualis est quando quis nascitur sive concipitur' ('*When people hear this [the word fatum], they can only understand it, due to the habit of their established use of language, to be the power of the position of the stars such as it is when someone is born or conceived*'). L. De Vreese, *Augustinus en de astrologie* (Maastricht: Veltman, 1933), p. 32: 'Zo vinden we dus hier in Augustinus' woord: 'fatum = vis positionis siderum' een voorbeeld van begrips-verenging, dat bijzonder illustratief is voor de alles-overheersende invloed der astrologie'.

[180] 'Si non aliam uenturo fata Neroni inuenere uiam ... iam nihil, o superi, querimur' ('*If the Fates could find no other way for Nero's coming, [...] then, O gods, we have no complaint*' (I. 33-34 & 37).

[181] B.M. Marti, 'The Meaning of the "Pharsalia" ', *American Journal of Philology* 66 (1945), 352-376 (pp. 374-375).

[182] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, pp. 140-155.

His attitude was: 'reject the *respublica* as an impossible form of government and make the existing order as good as possible'.[183] Lucan's *Pharsalia* is an example of someone who questions the justice behind the course of events leading to the principate, and thereby unavoidably casts doubt on the fairness of the new regime itself. This becomes clear in his use of *fatum* and *Fortuna.*

## 2. SENECA'S PHILOSOPHY ON ITS HEAD: *FATUM* GRAVITATING TOWARDS *FORTUNA*

In his article 'The Shadows of a Divine Presence in the *Pharsalia*',[184] F.M. Ahl points at the significance of the difference between *Fortuna* and *fatum* in the work. The belief in a universal just order is at stake here, which is reflected in the confusion about the two familiar terms: *fatum* seems to have let the wrong side win,[185] and one could draw conclusions concerning the restored Roman order by the new regime.

Lucan (AD 39 – 65) is doing almost the opposite of Seneca: he is not predisposed to anchor *Fortuna* firmly in the series of causes (*fatum*) and a just order, but he seems to bring *fatum* closer to a capricious and unjust *Fortuna.* The overall justice of the universal process is here on trial. Seneca, as mentioned before, insisted that as well *fatum* as *Fortuna* must be endured. However, he urges people 'contemnere *Fortunam*' (*De providentia* VI.6), while he does not seem to expect you 'contemnere *fatum*'. F. Ahl formulates the problem as follows: 'Would a Stoic follow where *Fortune* drags him?'[186] For Lucan 'fata sequitur', 'superos sequitur', or 'Fortunam sequitur' seems to be the same,[187] and he does thereby not necessarily deviate from Seneca's teaching.

However, by presenting *fatum* at times as a capricious entity,[188] the existence of a Stoic, purposeful and just order behind the vicissitudes of *Fortuna* become a delusion, a mere chimera. For instance, the Phocaeans are given the greatest praise because they did not follow *fata* ('non fata sequi'), but stuck to their principles of loyalty to the Roman state in the war with Caesar.[189] One is reminded of the Greek theory that Rome became powerful

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[183] D.B. George, 'Lucan's Cato and Stoic Attitudes to the Republic', *Classical Antiquity* 10.2 (1991), 237-258 (p. 245).
[184] *Hermes*, 102 (1974), 566-590 (p. 584).
[185] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 261: 'Fate is not always capricious in the *Pharsalia*, but even when it is not, it grants the victory to the wrong side'.
[186] F. Ahl 1974, p. 587.
[187] W.H. Friedrich, 'Cato, Caesar und Fortuna bei Lucan', *Hermes* 73 (1938), 391-423 (p. 408).
[188] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 261.
[189] LUCAN, *Pharsalia* III. 301-303: 'Phocais in dubiis ausa est servare iuventus / non Graia levitate fidem signataque iura et causas, non fata sequi' ('*Phocaean warriors, with no Greek fickleness, ventured / in dangerous times to preserve loyalty and sealed pacts / and to follow principles, not fatum*'); W.H. Friedrich 1938, p. 410: 'Dem göttlichen Willen sich zu widersetzen, war bei Vergil Sünde und führte zum Untergang; bei Lucan führt es ebenfalls zum Untergang, aber es ist die höchste Tugend'.

and subdued the East because of the help of *Fortuna*, meaning that their overwhelming dominance in the world was not founded on Roman excellence. Lucan seems to use the same argument here by suggesting that Caesar had above all the help of *Fortuna* to triumph over 'the right side'. In a (fictitious) speech at Pharsalia, Cicero tries to convince Pompey that the gods and *fatum* will bring victory over Caesar:

> quo tibi fervor abit aut quo fiducia fati?
> De superis, ingrate, times causamque senatus
> credere dis dubitas?[190]
>
> *Where has your enthusiasm gone? Or where your confidence in fatum?*
> *Ungrateful man, are you alarmed about the gods? Do you hesitate to trust*
> *to them the Senate's cause?*

Truth is that *fatum* was against the right cause at Pharsalia and brought victory to Caesar.

### 3. Active Opposition of Staunch Noblemen

Cato appears to be the real (Stoic) hero of the poem, even though he was on the losing side.[191] When in the end Caesar offered him clemency, there was still a possibility for Cato to defy his enemy by committing suicide.[192] He did not let himself be dominated by external circumstances, but kept the initiative, and took his life of his own free will. Cato's life as a whole, and his final act of resistance in particular, contained the seeds for a sterner and more uncompromising side of Stoicism in the principate.[193]

Lucan seems to suggest that he and other Stoics preferred 'a just Republic above a monarchy that would always degenerate into tyranny'.[194] Whether there were indeed some of the nobility under the rule of Nero who wanted to return to a Catonian Republic or merely wanted the Augustan principate back, is, according to D.B. George, impossible to tell.[195] At least some senators, among them C. Paetus Thrasea, were not convinced by Seneca's exhortations to submit willingly to the autocratic ruler of the new regime.

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[190] LUCAN, *Pharsalia* VII. 75-77.
[191] B.M. Marti 1945, p. 359: 'A perfect Sage other than Cato could not conceivably have become the hero of a Stoic epic in Latin'. On the importance of Cato as exemplum for Stoics see SENECA, *De constantia anima* II.1: *'The immortal gods have given to us in Cato a truer exemplar of the wise man than the earlier ages in Ulysses and Hercules'.*
[192] The end of Cato is not included in the unfinished epic, but there is little doubt that, even if it would not have been the grand finale of the work, the event certainly would have received considerable attention from Lucan; Susan H. Braund (trans. and intr.), *Lucan: Civil War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992; reiss. Oxford World's Classics, 1999), p. xxxviii: 'If Lucan's poem was planned in twelve books, the most likely climax and conclusion to the epic is the suicide of Cato at Utica after the battle of Thapsus in 46 BC'.
[193] D.B. George 1991, p. 252: 'He [i.e. Cato] will follow Republican Rome to her grave'.
[194] D.B. George 1991, p. 245.
[195] D.B. George 1991, p. 245 n. 27.

## 3.2. Opposition through Abstention

### 1. Stoicism Suspect

Resignation to the existing Roman order, or to the universal Stoic order can mean two different things. There was a more seditious interpretation possible of Stoic philosophy which could turn into an 'ideology of opposition'.[196] What if the *princeps* does not behave like a Stoic sage, and is the cause of injustices by letting his passion dominate his reason, so that the state becomes evil and corrupt?[197] What if the *princeps* did not sufficiently recognize the (traditional) need for *libertas senatoria* and he starts to behave as a tyrant towards the nobility?[198] At least from AD 62 onwards, adherence to Stoicism was considered to be politically dangerous. Also later, many Stoic noblemen would fall victim to the suspicions of *principes*, and their philosophy became a criminal charge.[199] Stoics had been starting to deploy a new kind of opposition: political resistance by way of abstention.[200] Loss of faith in the government led to a refusal to cooperate, while this kind of goodwill stood from the beginning at the basis of the principate's ideology. The concrete political situation became an important issue for men to participate in public life. To seek *otium* ('leisure') could now be equated with a disapproval of the current *princeps* and an act of disloyalty.

### 2. Seneca's Exhortation to Active Involvement in '*De otio*'

Seneca perceived the danger of Stoicism getting a reputation for opposing the *princeps*' rule. Some more radical adherents seemed to have used the Stoic tenets to justify their abstention from politics.[201] In his work *De otio* (VIII.1-4) Seneca discusses the Stoic claim that a wise man should not attach himself to any sort of *respublica*: 'Negant nostri sapientem ad quamlibet rem publicam accessurum'. He reasons that if one was very scrupulous, no *respublica* could ever be found which could tolerate the wise man, or which the wise man could tolerate. If we follow this path of reasoning, he continues, leisure begins to be a necessity for all of us, 'quia quod unum preferri poterat otio, nusquam est' (*'because the one thing that might have been preferred to leisure nowhere exists'*).[202]

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196 J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 119.
197 Seneca's *De clementia* can also be seen as clarifying the duties of the *princeps* from a Stoic point of view. Since there was no external authority that could bring the *princeps* to account, Seneca nevertheless tried to make Nero feel responsible towards the deity (or 'Reason'). This provided of course also the Stoic nobility with an 'objective' means to assess the *princeps*' behaviour.
198 This was the critique of the Stoic senator Thrasea (Miriam T. Griffin 1976, p. 101).
199 Miriam T. Griffin 1976, p. 363.
200 Miriam T. Griffin 1976, p. 364.
201 Miriam T. Griffin 1976, p. 366.
202 SENECA, *De otio* VIII.4.

The withdrawal of all the virtuous men from public affairs would be fatal for society, and thus inevitably also for themselves. Miriam T. Griffin, rightly I think, states that Seneca is arguing in *De otio* against the idea of Stoic opposition by abstention, and is trying to remove the suspicions already cast on Stoicism.[203] Public service remains, in Seneca's eyes, a Stoic demand, also within the principate.[204] Notice that Seneca does not use philosophical reasons when he sought to retire in AD 62 and 64: his case was based on ill health and old age, and he mentioned the retirement of respectable, loyal men such as Agrippa and Maecenas as precedents.

Within the same work, Seneca envisages the existence of a truly universal *respublica*:

> Duas res publicas animo complectamur, alteram magnam et vere publicam, qua dii atque homines continentur, in qua non ad hunc angulum respicimus aut ad illum, sed terminos civitatis nostrae cum sole metimur; alteram, cui nos adscripsit condicio nascendi. Haec aut Atheniensium erit aut Carthaginensium, aut alterius alicuius urbis, quae non ad omnis pertineat homines sed ad certos.[205]
>
> *Let us grasp the idea that there are two commonwealths – the one, a vast and truly common state, which embraces alike gods and men, in which we look neither to this corner of earth nor to that, but measure the bounds of our citizenship by the path of the sun; the other, the one which we have been assigned by birth. This will be the commonwealth of the Athenians or of the Carthaginians, or of any other city that belongs, not to all, but to some particular race of men.*

Each citizenship comes with its own reponsibilities, proximate duties in one's *respublica* by birth, and ultimate duties in the universal *respublica*.[206] The latter, to which every man belongs, can best be served in leisure, whereby one has time to inquire about *virtus*, and about many other philosophical and scientific issues concerning the universe.[207] Seneca insists that nature has prepared man for both action and contemplation.[208] In this way he can defend the worth of learned leisure, wherein man is fulfilling his ultimate duties, while insisting that everybody has also civic duties to fulfill within the *respublica* in which he is born, even if one finds fault with it. This seems to imply that also the Roman "*respublica*" was not the ideal *respublica* where justice ruled and where each member was given what was due to him (as Cicero described it in his *De republica*). This had encouraged some in the first place to prefer serving the universal *respublica* in leisure, rather than the *respublica* into which they were born.

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[203] It is regrettable that not the full treatise has come down to us, so that perhaps valuable information about Seneca's objective has been lost.

[204] T.G. Rosenmeyer 1989, p. 88; Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 40: 'The [Stoic] sage should engage in politics, irrespective of the form of government under which he lives'.

[205] *De otio* IV. 1.

[206] J. Dougherty, 'Exiles in the Earthly City: The Heritage of Saint Augustine', in *Civitas: Religious Interpretation of the later Chrisian*, ed. by P.S. Hawkins, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), pp. 105-121 (p. 105).

[207] *De otio* IV. 2.

[208] *De otio* V. 1: 'Natura nos ad utrumque genuit, et contemplationi rerum et actioni'.

## 2. EPICUREAN CHANCE

Whereas Stoicism within Augustine's thinking has received considerable attention,[209] research on the Epicurean input lags behind. Dean Simpson investigated in his article 'Epicureanism in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine'[210] the importance of Epicurean thought for Augustine. He argued that the latter took over many aspects from Epicureanism, notably its high appreciation of friendship, and its terminology on the emotions.

It is important to know how Epicurean philosophy came to Augustine. One can safely assume that his knowledge came indirectly via Lucretius, and above all, Cicero. Although Cicero is not a very good basis for the ethical aspects of Epicureanism, for issues such as its physics, ideas on providence and the gods, he seems to offer a reliable account of Epicurus' own thoughts.

At the core of Epicurean philosophy lies an unusual concept: the slight, spontaneous swerve of the atom:

> Corpora cum deorsum rectum per inane feruntur
> ponderibus propriis, incerto tempore ferme
> incertisque locis spatio depellere paulum.[211]
>
> *When the atoms are travelling straight down through empty space by their own weight, at quite indeterminate times and places they swerve ever so little from their course.*

Epicureans gave two reasons for modifying Democritus' mechanic atom theory in this way: it ensures that the atoms really will collide and thus form compounds, since a scientific law prescribes that in the void all atoms, even if they have a different weight, fall at the same speed. The other reason is related to the very important issue of the free will of man.

Lucretius:

> Denique si semper motus conectitur omnis
> et vetere exoritur <semper> novus ordine certo
> nec declinando faciunt primordia motus
> principium quoddam quod fati foedera rumpat,
> ex finito ne causam causa sequatur,
> libera per terras unde haec animantibus exstat,
> unde est haec, inquam, fatis avulsa voluntas
> per quam progredimur quo ducit quemque voluptas,
> declinamus item motus nec tempore certo
> nec regione loci certa, sed ubi ipsa tulit mens?[212]

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[209] M. Spanneut, 'Le Stoicisme et saint Augustin' in *Forma Futuri: studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino*, (Toronto: 1975), pp. 896-914; Marianne Djuth, 'Stoicism and Augustine's Doctrine of Human Freedom after 396' in *Presbyter Factus Sum* Collectanea augustiniana 2, ed. by J.T. Lienhard, E.C. Muller and R.J. Teske (New York: Lang), pp. 387-401; R. J. O'Connell, '*De libero arbitrio* I: Stoicism revisited', *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 49-68; F.B.A. Asiedu, 'The Wise Man and the Limits of Virtue in *De beata vita*: Stoic Self-Sufficiency or Augustinian Irony?', *Augustiniana* 49 (1999), 215-234.

[210] *Augustinian Studies* 16 (1985), 39-48

[211] LUCRETIUS, *De rerum natura* II. 217-219.

> *Again, if all movement is always interconnected, the new arising from the old in a determinate order – if the atoms never swerve so as to originate some new movement that will snap the bonds of fate, the everlasting sequence of cause and effect – what is the source of the free will possessed by living things throughout the earth? What, I repeat, is the source of that will-power snatched from the fates, whereby we follow the path along which we are severally led by pleasure, swerving from our course at no set time or place but at the bidding of our own hearts?*

Nevertheless, this 'tiny swerve' has received the most scathing criticism. In itself it contradicted the basic "laws of nature" on which Epicurus' system was based:

> It is a breach of his own first principle that 'nothing is created out of nothing', for it is a force absolutely without a cause. The laws of atomic being require that the atoms should fall eternally without meeting: here is an occasional causeless interruption of that universal principle.[213]

In *De finibus* (I. vi (17-21)), Cicero criticises Epicurean physics, claiming that it was almost entirely borrowed from Democritus' theory of the atoms, while Epicurus had made some modifications for the worse. Especially the introduction of a little swerve of the atoms, crucial for the Epicurean philosophy, was scorned by Stoics and sceptics alike:

> Declinare dixit atomum perpaulum, quo nihil posset fieri minus; [...] Quae cum res tota ficta sit pueriliter, tum ne efficit quidem quod vult. Nam et ipsa declinatio ad libidinem fingitur (ait enim declinare atomum sine causa, quo nihil turpius physico qum fieri quidquam sine causa dicere).[214]
>
> *He [= Epicurus] said that the atom deviates very little, the smallest divergence possible; [...] Not only is the whole construct a naive fabrication, but it also assuredly does not have the desired effect. The deviation itself is fabricated to his own liking. (For he says that the atom deviates without a cause, whereby nothing is more repulsive for science than to say that something happens without a cause).*

Epicurus rejected the necessity of fate which endangered the idea of free will, and posited instead an indeterministic world by breaking the chain of causality at a fundamental level: he introduced an uncaused slight swerve of the miniscule atoms.[215] This arbitrary and unpredictable deviation from the laws of nature fundamentally shaped his view on man's psyche. Also the mind (*animus*) was made of light atoms, and their spontaneous slight swerves vouchsaved man's free will.

For the Epicureans there was no final cause, no purpose, no teleological view, no god(s) caring for mankind,[216] no providence steering the universe, so that, for instance, divination became impossible.[217]

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[212] LUCRETIUS, *De rerum natura* II. 251-260; transl. by R.E. Latham, *Lucretius: The Nature of the Universe* (Middlesex, 1952), p. 67.

[213] C.Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), pp. 317-8.

[214] CICERO, *De finibus* I. vi (19).

[215] V. Cioffari, s.v. 'Fortune, Fate, and Chance', in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 2 (New York: Scribner, 1973), p. 225: 'In the Epicurean system events were not causally connected and happened either as a result of chance or of undetermined free will'.

[216] CICERO, *De div.* II. 104: 'Epicurusne? Qui negat quicquam deos nec alieni curare nec sui'.

[217] In Cicero's *De divinatione*, the Stoics claim that principle of divination is true is refuted by falling back on the notion of "chance" events: There is no meaningful connection between for instance the shape of the liver of a sacrificed animal and the outcome of future events. For example when the Stoic Quintus claims that

This view not only drove the Stoics to fierce opposition, it was later also anathema to the Christians, who believed in a caring providence of God. Howard Jones writes about this aspect of the Epicurean doctrine: 'The denial of divine providence struck at the very heart of the Christian message'.[218]

This is not the only reason why Epicureanism deserves a place in this study. The spontaneous swerve makes the atoms collide *fortuitously*, and therefore no efficient cause for this movement exists:

> Quid est enim magnum, cum causas rerum efficientes sustuleris, de corpusculorum (ita enim appellat atomos) concursione fortuita loqui?[219]
>
> *What is there so great to talk about the accidental collision of minute bodies (that is his name for atoms), when you have abolished the efficient causes of things?*

This tightly connects the Epicurean world-view with the concept of "chance" down to the smallest particle. In this sense it is justified to perceive a link between Epicureanism and *Fortuna*, the goddess of chance. W.W. Fowler, in his article on *Fortuna*, acknowledges the correlation between the spread of Epicureanism at Rome and the success of *Fortuna*.[220] Epicurus himself, however, explicitly denied the existence of a divine power behind chance:

> *As to chance, he does not regard it as a god as most men do (for in a god's acts there is no disorder), nor as an uncertain cause <of all things>: for he does not believe that good and evil are given by chance to man for the framing of a blessed life, but that opportunities for great good and great evil are afforded by it.*[221]

By providing a whole cosmology with at its centre the notion of chance through the fortuitous collisions of the atoms, the idea of an all-powerful *Fortuna* could gain credence. Furthermore, the Epicureans themselves, with their sceptical approach towards the traditional Roman religion (well-attested in the first book of Cicero's *De divinatione* and *De natura deorum*), calling many aspects of it *superstitio*, a vacuum was created within the Romans' religious feeling which the Epicurean philosophy itself could not fill.[222] Seen from this angle, *Fortuna* could form a bridge between Epicureanism and traditional Roman religion: "chance", the mechanical "principle" of Epicurean physics becomes a divine Power.

Lucretius, no doubt rhetorically, sometimes makes use of the imagery of *Fortuna*, who directs the events in such a purposeless, "traditional god"-forsaken world:

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"Jupiter's statue was being set up at the very time the conspiracy (of Catiline) was being exposed", Cotta reacts: "et tu scilicet mavis numine deorum id factum quam casu arbitrari" "*You, of course, prefer to attribute this coincidence to a divine decree rather than to chance.*" (CICERO, *De div.* I. 21 & II. 47.) Although the academic Cotta is talking here, an Epicurean could also have made this point.

[218] H. Jones, *The Epicurean Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 98.

[219] CICERO, *Academica*, I.6.

[220] W.W. Fowler, s.v. 'Fortune: Roman', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* VI, (New York: Clark, 1913), p. 102.

[221] EPICURUS, *Epistula ad Menoeceum* (134).

[222] W.W. Fowler, *The Roman Religious Experience* (Gifford Lectures, Edinburgh, 1910-11) (London: Clarendon, 1911), p. 360.

quod procul a nobis flectat Fortuna gubernans,
et ratio potius quam res persuedeat ipsa
succidere horrisono posse omnia victa fragore.[223]

*May guiding Fortuna turn this (= destruction of the world) far away from us, and may reason rather than the event itself convince you that the whole world can collapse with one terribly resounding crash.*

Epicurus, too, sometimes used *Τύχη* personified: '*I have anticipated thee, Fortuna (Tyche), and entrenched myself against all thy secret attacks*'.[224]

Also elsewhere, her impact on man's life is put into an Epicurean ethical perspective:

*(Nature) teaches us to pay little heed to what Fortuna (Tyche) brings, and when we are prosperous to understand that we are unfortunate, and when we are unfortunate not to regard prosperity highly, and to receive unmoved the good things which come from Fortuna and to range ourselves boldly against the seeming evils which she brings: for all that the many regard as good or evil is fleeting, and wisdom has nothing in common with Fortuna (Tyche).*

This is repeated in Cicero's *De finibus* I.63:

Optime vero Epicurus, quod 'exiguam' dixit 'Fortunam intervenire sapienti, maximasque ab eo et gravissimas res consilio ipsius et ratione administrari'.

*It is a fine saying of Epicurus that 'the Wise Man is but little interfered with by Fortuna: the great concerns of life, the things that matter, are controlled by his own wisdom and reason'.*

Maybe the game of a pinball machine can provide us here with an effective analogy to illustrate the difference between belief in *Fortuna* and Epicureanism. He who believes in the power of *Fortuna*, thinks there is an irrational deity playing the pinball machine, with him as the play-ball. For Epicureans, however, there is no-one playing the pinball machine, and the ball itself can choose its movements, according to what it perceives to be the way providing it with the most pleasurable journey.

Since the gods have no interest in human affairs, there is no divine punishment and reward, neither in this life, nor beyond death, since once dead we cease to exist.[225] We do not need to be afraid any more of the horrors of Hades:

Cerberus et furiae iam vero et lucis egestas
Tartarus horriferos eructans faucibus aestus
Qui neque sunt usquam nec possunt esse profecto.[226]

*As for Cerberus and the Furies and the pitchy darkness and the jaws of Hell belching abominable fumes, these are not and cannot be anywhere at all.*

There is a clear parallel between the paramount place Epicurus attributes to the atoms in his physics, as the basis of all being, and his focus on the individual person for his ethics,

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[223] LUCRETIUS, *De rerum natura* V. 107-109.
[224] EPICURUS, *Fragments* (XLVII).
[225] EPICURUS, *Letter to Menoeceus* (124): '*Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation*'.
[226] LUCRETIUS, *De rerum natura* III. 1011-3.

claiming the individual to be the aim of all action. The standard for good and evil becomes what the individual feels to be good and evil for him.[227]

Cicero saw another great danger inherent in the Epicurean ideal: their adherents posed a threat for the welfare of the Roman *respublica* by objecting to an active engagement in politics and public life for the wise man, and giving preference to a life of leisure in their "Garden". In this way valuable men, who could have made great contributions to Rome, were encouraged to remain publicly inactive.[228] Withdrawal from the world of affairs was indeed an important element in the Epicurean search for the untroubled life.[229] Their doctrine, Plutarch noticed further, undermined the pillars of society, since it rejected divination and the worship of heavenly bodies.[230] Cicero puts in the mouth of Cotta that Epicurus had '*uprooted and exterminated all religion from the human heart*'.[231]

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[227] E. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy* (transl. by L.R. Palmer, revised by W. Nestle) (Bristol, 1997 [=1931]), p. 238.

[228] In the preface of his *De republica*, Cicero attacks the Epicurean's escapist philosophy. J.G.F. Powell, 'Introduction: Cicero's Philosophical works and their Background' in *Cicero the Philosopher. Twelve Papers*, ed. and introd. by J.G.F. Powell, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 29-30.

[229] LUCRETIUS, *De rerum natura* V. 1129-30: ut satius multo iam sit parere quietum
quam regere imperio res velle et regna tenere
(*so that it would be far better to lead a quiet life in subjection, than to long for sovereign authority and possessing kingdoms*).

[230] H. Jones 1989, p. 111; PLUTARCH, *Adversus Colotem* 27.

[231] CICERO, *De natura deorum* I. 121: 'Epicurus vero ex animis hominum extraxit radicitus religionem'.

# 3. THE ULTIMATE PRINCIPLE BEHIND WORLDLY REALITY: AN ALL-EMBRACING CAUSAL ORDER, OR CHANCE

## 3.1. Stoic *fatum* or Epicurean *casus*

Stoicism and Epicureanism differed radically in their cosmology. Stoicism saw the universe as a deterministic order, structured by an absolute rule of causality.[232] Epicureanism introduced an inherent indeterminism in the universe, based upon chance collisions of the atoms. The Epicureans perceived 'chance' as an uncaused, spontaneous event in order to rescue free will from the Stoic's inexorable and deterministic chain of causes.

Both positions were equally open to criticism. Stoics had to explain the irregularities and disorder in the world, and Epicureans had of course to account for the many regular and harmonious manifestations within the universe. Sometimes ancient writers presented the two opposite views alongside each other, as if the issue of the ultimate principle could not be decisively solved, and disagreement seemed to remain about this basic matter.

Cicero very adequately articulated the dilemma in his criticism of the concept of *fatum*:

> Quaero igitur (atque hoc late patebit), si fati omnino nullum nomen, nulla natura, nulla vis esset et forte temere casu aut pleraque fierent aut omnia, num aliter, ac nunc eveniunt, evenirent. Quid ergo adtinet inculcare fatum, cum sine fato ratio omnium rerum ad naturam Fortunamve referatur?[233]
>
> *So I ask –and this will have wide implications: if no-one had ever heard of fatum, if it did not exist, and if it had no influence, and most or all things came about by chance, at random, and fortuitously, would they happen in a different way from in which they do now? What then is the relevance of forcing fatum upon us, when in the absence of fatum everything can be explained by nature or Fortuna?*

*Fortuna*, being the personified power behind chance, is here presented as a competitor on equal footing with *fatum* to explain reality. The uncertainty expressed by Cicero was perhaps to be expected from an adherent of the sceptical academics, but Seneca, too, seems to acknowledge the possibility of an Epicurean viewpoint of cosmology, besides the stance of his own Stoic school:

> Sive nos inexorabili lege fata constringunt, sive arbiter deus universi cuncta disposuit, sive casus res humanas sine ordine impellit et iactat, philosophia nos tueri debet.

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[232] I leave to one side the moral dimension of the Stoic order.
[233] CICERO, *De fato* III. 6.

> *Whether the Fates shackle us to an inexorable law, whether the judge, God of the universe, has set all things in order, or whether chance drives and tosses about the affairs of mankind without any order, it is philosophy that has the duty of protecting us.*[234]

For Seneca one of the main characteristics of chance ('casus') is disorder ('sine ordine'). The same opinion can be found in Seneca's tragedy *Phaedra* (978-979):

> Res humanas ordine nullo
> Fortuna regit
> *Fortuna rules the human affairs with no order.*

One should not devalue the significance of these statements of uncertainty concerning the ultimate reality of the universe, on the ground that these are merely rhetorical clichés.[235] The fact that they could have become rhetorical clichés in the first place, and that they survived for such a long time, indicates that the issue remained debatable and pertinent.

Also in the previously discussed passage of Tacitus (*Annales* VI. 22) the author remains in doubt whether *fatum* or chance controls human affairs:

> In incerto iudicium est fatone res mortalium et necessitate immutabili an forte volvantur quippe sapientissimos veterum quique sectam eorum aemulantur diversos reperies.
>
> *I feel uncertain whether human affairs are directed by Fate's unalterable necessity – or by chance. On this question the wisest ancient thinkers and their disciples differ.*

He notes further the Stoic order, astrological fate, and Epicurean chance as the current rival views on the matter. Within these passages chance ('*casus*') emerges as a universal explanatory principle of reality, and it is not inconceivable that this opinion must have fostered belief in an all-powerful divinity *Fortuna panthea.* The (Neo-)Platonist Plotinus is one who, on the other hand, resolutely rejects the cosmology of the Epicureans: '*To make the existence and coherent structure of this Universe depend upon automatic activity and upon chance is against all good sense*'.[236]

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[234] SENECA, *Epistulae* XVI. 5.

[235] The poet Lucan (AD 39 - 65), too, at the beginning of book II of his epic poem *Pharsalia* (or *Bellum civile*) presents the two possibilities: 'siue parens rerum, cum primum informia regna / materiamque rudem flamma cedente recepit, / fixit in aeternum causas, qua cuncta coercet / se quoque lege tenens, et saecula iussa ferentem / fatorum inmoto diuisit limite mundum, / siue nihil positum est, sed fors incerta uagatur / fertque refertque uices et habet mortalia casus,' *'Perhaps when the Creator first took up his shapeless realm / of raw matter after the conflagration had died down, / he fixed causes for eternity, binding himself too by his / all-controlling law, and with the immovable boundary of destiny / arranged the universe to introduce prescribed ages. / Or perhaps nothing is ordained, but Chance at random wanders / bringing change after change, and accident is master of mortal affairs.'* (II. 7-13).

[236] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II. 1 (1).

# 3.2. Chaos theory, quantum theory and synchronicity

*The function of indeterminism or the element of chance in the universe is a theme which runs from antiquity to modern times. It enters unavoidably into modern scientific developments.*

V. Cioffari[237]

The debate on (deterministic causal) order versus chance is thus not confined to ancient times but remains an important issue throughout the ages, impinging also on our lives. This is one of the reasons why present research on *Fortuna* has also a contemporary relevance and resonance. The debate between the Stoic view on order, which is deterministic and causal, and the Epicurean view of indeterminism through the randomness of genuine chance, has indeed a modern-day counterpart.

## 3.2.1. Chaos theory

An innovative new development in science, which has been called rather misleadingly the *chaos theory*, has breathed new life into the debate whether there is ultimately order or chaos in the universe. The predilection of many outsiders to associate the mathematical concept of chaos with pure chance, randomness and an absence of causation, mirrors somehow the fascination of the populace with *Fortuna* in antiquity.

The chaos theory can best be described as the mathematics of deterministic chaos. Important is that causation, on which the universal laws of physics depend, is thereby being preserved. Chaos theory proves that a system need not be complex to behave 'chaotically'. Even the behaviour of a spherical pendulum is random, but nevertheless deterministic.[238] When one witnesses the random behaviour of the moon Hyperion, which tumbles in a complex and irregular pattern around Saturn (even though its orbit is precise and regular), then it can be a surprise that this capricious behaviour, too, is part of the underlying order of the simple laws of nature.[239] Prediction of such chaotic systems is severely limited, not because of the complexity of the system as a whole, but because we are necessarily ignorant of the ultra-fine details of the initial conditions.[240] A chaotic system is so sensitive to

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[237] V. Cioffari, s.v. 'Fortune, Fate, and Chance', in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* 2 (New York: Scribner, 1973), pp. 225-236 (p. 225).
[238] See I. Stewart (1997, pp. 64-79) for a discussion.
[239] P. Davies, 'Fractals, Chaos and Strange Attractors', in *The Faber Book of Science*, ed. by J. Carey (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 497-502 (p. 501).
[240] P. Davies 1995, p. 501.

measurement that this cannot be done exactly enough to make a reliable prediction even over a fairly small period of time.[241]

Maybe one of the most familiar chaotic systems is the weather. The main reason why we still cannot forecast the weather very accurately despite the use of powerful computers is because of its chaotic behaviour. The 'Butterfly effect',[242] which stands for small changes in the initial conditions can produce very great differences in the final phenomena, is derived from the fact that even the smallest change in the state of the atmosphere (the flapping of a single butterfly's wing) could alter the weather dramatically over a period of time.[243] The chaos theory has thus taught us a lesson in humility by showing that even the simple immutable laws of nature, laid bare by human intellect, are at times themselves responsible for irregular behaviour and are therefore unpredictable.

More importantly, however, it confirms that what we say is due to chance (within a closed system), for instance, the result of a throw of a die, is not causeless after all, but still determined by the underlying immutable laws of nature. Even if we could identify all the factors involved in the throw of the die, we cannot predict the outcome, because we cannot know the exact initial conditions, i.e. the input data of the variables of the mathematical equations.[244]

Chaos theory therefore upholds the deterministic universal causation and the laws of nature, but it reveals that the causal order of the universe is nevertheless full of capricious behaviour. An event can thus be both deterministic and unpredictable without being truly random [i.e. causeless]. Therefore, the conclusion seems to be that, although many events seem to happen at random by showing an irregular and unpredictable behaviour, it does not mean that they do not fall within a deterministic system. It rather means that this system is too complex and sensitive for our limited intellect and imperfect perception to make a trustworthy prediction about its state at a particular moment in time.

### 3.2.2. Quantum theory

History has taught us to take Epicurean ideas seriously, for instance, that the universe is built out of atoms (taken over from Democritus), the explanation of events from a purely

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241 P. Davies 1995, p. 500: 'Any input error multiples itself at an escalating rate as a function of prediction time, so that before long it engulfs the calculation, and all predictive power is lost'.

242 This term was introduced by E. Lorenz in his paper at a conference in Washington, entitled: 'Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?' (Z. Sardar & Iwona Abrams, *Introducing Chaos* (Duxford: Icon Books, 1998; repr. 2000), pp. 54-55); I. Stewart (1997, pp. 130-131) puts this supposition in perspective.

243 I. Stewart 1997, pp. 115-134 (esp. p. 129).

244 Even the most sophisticated program for statistics cannot predict the outcome of me throwing dice.

mechanical point of view, thereby excluding any participation of the divine, and the "Darwinian" coloured theory of evolution.[245] Nowadays, *Quantum theory* seems to confirm even the most bizarre principle of Epicurean cosmology, namely the existence of a causeless event, a genuine chance occurrence on (sub-)atomic level.[246]

The scientist Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) formulated a principle, later to be called after him "Heisenberg's uncertainty principle", which stands at the heart of quantum mechanics. It reveals an inherent feature of subatomic matter: the position and momentum of a particle cannot be specified simultaneously.[247] This means that everything we can measure is subject to truly random fluctuations,[248] and this makes the subatomic world genuinely and inherently fortuitous and unintelligible.[249] Quantum uncertainty leads to the acceptance of indeterminacy and means the abandonment of the universality of the law of causation: for instance, the decay of a particular radioactive nucleus appears to be intrinsically uncertain, and this is not due to the limitations of man's accurate measuring or a too great degree of freedom within the process.[250] It seems to be an effect without a cause,[251] and it suggests that the ultimate laws of nature are not even causal, so that chance is built into the very fabric of reality.[252]

One would expect that the indeterminism associated with quantum effects intrudes into the dynamics of all systems at the atomic level. The oddity, however, is that quantum mechanics seems to have a subduing effect on chaos.[253] The modern view on the guiding principle in the Universe seems to be that despite leaning towards the Epicurean view on the subatomic scale (through quantum mechanics), where genuine randomness and causeless events exist, a Stoic deterministic order can be preserved on the macroscopic scale, wherein even seemingly chance events find a place thanks to the chaos theory.[254]

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[245] E. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, 13th edn, rev. by W. Nestle, trans. by L.R. Palmer, ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 1931; repr. Bristol: Thoemmes, 1997), p. 235.
[246] Caroline Series, 'Fractals, Chaos and Strange Attractors', in *The Faber Book of Science*, ed. by J. Carey (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 495-504 (p. 499): 'Quantum physics thus builds chance into the very fabric of reality'.
[247] F.W. Bridgeman (et al.), 'Uncertainty and Other Worlds', in *The Faber Book of Science*, ed. by J. Carey, (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 277-280 (p. 277).
[248] P. Davies 1995, p. 499.
[249] I. Stewart 1997, p. 281.
[250] P. Davies 1995, p. 499.
[251] M. Born, 'Quantum Mechanics: Mines and Machine-Guns', in *The Faber Book of Science*, ed. by J. Carey (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 281-285 (p. 285); taken from Max Born, *Physics in My Generation* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1956).
[252] P. Davies 1995, p. 499.
[253] P. Davies 1995, p. 501.
[254] Also I. Stewart 1997, pp. 281-282.

### 3.2.3. Chaos theory and quantum uncertainty (I. Stewart)

The revolutionary claims of quantum theory, for instance, that the universality of the law of cause and effect needed to be given up, led Einstein to write a letter to the physicist Max Born:

> You believe in the God who plays dice, and I in complete law and order ... even the great initial success of the quantum theory does not make me believe in the fundamental dice game.[255]

What happened was that scientists applied to the uncertain behaviour of subatomic particles the theory of probabilities, as if they were all 'throws of the quantum die'. In this way quantum mechanics could remain overall a deterministic theory, since the relative probabilities of different outcomes evolve in a deterministic manner.[256] The results obtained by this method were in accordance with reality.

The throw of a die is however not a good example of a genuine chance event, but more one of deterministic chaos. Einstein had chosen his metaphor badly. I. Stewart however wonders whether the throw of the quantum die, too, cannot actually be an example of deterministic chaos, and whether quantum indeterminism and the idea of causeless events, even though they have their practical usefulness, did not come into existence because of man's limitations. Just as a chance event was perceived by the Stoics to have its hidden causes, which made them also belong to *fatum*, so the professed indeterminism of quantum uncertainty might after all be part of a deterministic causal order. Can it be indeed possible to explain the strange behaviour of fundamental particles without having resource to irreducible randomness?

The quantum theory is said to be irreducibly probabilistic. I. Stewart, along with T. Palmer, thinks it possible to supply quantum mechanics with a deterministic underpinning through the introduction of a hidden variable theory.[257] He gives examples of such 'hidden variable' chaotic dynamic behaving sufficiently 'nastily' [read: randomly] to match the uncertainty of quantum mechanics, while remaining safely within the deterministic causal order.[258] If this can be done, then

> An infinitely intelligent being with perfect senses – God, Vast Intellect, or Deep Thought – might actually be able to predict exactly when a given atom of radium will decay, a given electron shift in its orbit. But, with our limited intellects and imperfect senses, we may never be able to find the trick.

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255 I Stewart 1997, p. 329.
256 P. Davies 1995, p. 499.
257 I. Stewart 1997, pp. 351-356. This means that an important factor in the behaviour of the particles might have been overlooked.
258 This kind of chaotic dynamics has intertwined basins, which makes them extremely sensitive, behaving more 'randomly' than ordinary dice.

The conclusion of all this would surely be profound: 'The mechanism of chaos', I. Stewart further writes, 'provides a wonderful opportunity for God to run His universe with deterministic laws, yet simultaneously to make fundamental particles seem probabilistic.'[259] Within this context, chance might then indeed be as in the words of Anatole France 'the pseudonym of God when he did not want to sign'.[260]

By being able to preserve deterministic causality in the universe, the notion of a purpose, and meaning gains credibility. Is there indeed a divine plan involved in the organization of the universe? The question in I. Stewart's book title, *Does God Play Dice?*, which was inspired by Einstein's letter, receives in the end the response: 'If God played dice .. He'd win'.[261] The causal determinism behind the seeming randomness of throwing dice can make it possible for an all-knowing and all-powerful deity to predict and arrange the outcome of his own throw. He knows, and can keep perfect control over, all the variables involved, such as velocity and the turns of the die per second. Elizabeth A. Johnson picked up the quotation of Einstein's letter in her article: '*Does God Play Dice? Divine Providence and Chance*',[262] which contains some theological reactions to the chaos theory. She recounts that some people even see in the "butterfly effect"[263] an opportunity to explain God's active interferences in the world. It would, for instance, be worth praying for the sun to shine on a church picnic next weekend, because God will only need to produce a very slight change in the initial weather conditions to bring this about, a change so small that humans cannot discern it at all![264]

One of the main characteristics of the Stoic deity (and also of (Neo-)Platonism, and Christianity) is that its order is just. The chaos theory has nothing to say about this aspect of the universe, since its tenets have no explicit moral dimension. One could however argue that the absence of sheer randomness [read: arbitrariness] in the universe seems to indicate a certain degree of justice. On the other hand, does a deterministic and rationally structured universe automatically imply what we would call a just universe? Astrological fate, too, consists of a deterministic, rational order, but few would regard it as a fair system.

*Chaos theory* teaches us that even if Seneca's claim is right about reason being able to lay bare all the hidden causes of the natural processes, man will nevertheless be incapable of

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[259] I Stewart 1997, p. 356. The italics in the quotation are mine.
[260] Cited from I. Stewart 1997, p. 383.
[261] I. Stewart 1997, p. 383.
[262] *Theological Studies* 57 (1996), 3-18.
[263] The law that slight differences in the initial conditions can produce very great differences in the final phenomena.
[264] Eliabeth A. Johnson 1996, p. 9. She herself would reject such a view on God's interaction. See section 2.6. for her ideas on God's providence and activity in the world.

rationally predicting the future outcomes of chaotic systems, such as the weather.[265] Because of the unpredictability of chaotic processes, even within a strictly deterministic account of nature, the future states of the Universe are in some sense 'open' from a human point of view.[266] Chaos theory proves that causal determinism does not necessarily imply predictability.

In this context the notion of free will demands reconsideration: if one accepts the fundamental indeterminacy of quantum uncertainty, then - just as in the case of the Epicurean spontaneous and uncaused swerve of the atoms - free will is an independent reality in itself. If one believes, together with I. Stewart, that quantum uncertainty might after all be a very chaotic, but still deterministic, dynamic, then, just as with Stoicism, free will loses its absolute notion. It does, however, preserve a seeming indeterminacy and openness from a human point of view, because human actions will always remain unpredictable. Leo Tolstoy wrote: 'Freewill is for history only an expression connoting what we do not know about the laws of human life.'[267] With the new knowledge of the chaos theory in mind we can now add: even if we would know the laws of human life, we still would not be able to explain someone's actions, because we cannot know perfectly the input needed for all the variables in these laws. Human behaviour is, and will remain, considering our limitations, inescapably unpredictable (but not so for an all-knowing and all-powerful deity).

## 3.2.4. Synchronicity

### 1. Complementing Causality

Whereas the quantum theory casts doubt on the universal physical law of causality, the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) posited a new law equal in status to causality, namely synchronicity, and he added this new explanatory principle to the triad of classical physics (time, space and causality).[268] Synchronicity complemented thereby causality in order to reach a more comprehensive knowledge of reality.[269]

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[265] P. Davies 1995, p. 502: 'We can't even predict the next drip from a dripping tap when it gets irregular. Each drip sets up the conditions for the next, the smallest variation blows prediction apart, and the weather is unpredictable the same way, will always be unpredictable'.

[266] P. Davies 1995, p. 502: 'The final chapter of the great cosmic book has yet to be written'.

[267] L. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. and intr. by Rosemary Edmunds, rev. edn (London: Penguin Books, 1978; reissued in one vol. 1982), p. 1140.

[268] Particularly relevant are two essays: 'Synchorinicty: An Acausal Connecting Principle', and 'On Synchronicity', in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung vol. 8, 2nd edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

[269] Jolande Jacobi, *De psychologie van Carl G. Jung: Een inleiding tot zijn werk* (trans. by M. Drukker) (Cothen: Servire Uitgevers, 1992), p. 72.

As the term itself indicates, essential to synchronicity is the coinciding of events in space and time. Whereas one normally would ascribe all synchronisms to mere chance, some of these events are, according to Jung, connected with each other in a deeper meaning.[270] A simple example of such a 'meaningful coincidence' is the following: just when you are thinking of a friend of yours you have not seen for a while, he rings you up.[271] These meaningful connections appear to be a-causal.[272] For Jung, synchronicity became the complete opposite of causality, so that a new interconnecting web of events can be established other than the one based on causation.

A special mutual connection exists not only between the objective events themselves, but also between them and the subjective psychological state(s) of the observer(s), whereby the individual's own psyche is mysteriously reflected in the objective material.[273] Synchronicity thus seems to transcend the boundaries between mind and matter.[274] The interdependence between the objective events 'posits a psychoid level of reality, which exists prior to human consciousness'. This implies an 'a-causal order and pattern in the cosmos, a transcendental meaning inherent in the collective psyche'.[275]

### 2. THE ORACLE BOOK *I CHING*

Jung took great interest in the book *I Ching*,[276] a Chinese ancient oracle based on the chance selection of a particular hexagram of the book via a meditative process. This particular passage is supposed to closely reflect the psychological state of the observer, and to provide a (poetic) answer to his question.[277]

The working of *I Ching* shows similarities with the divination by lots performed in the sanctuary of *Fortuna* at Praeneste. There, a child randomly drew a lot out of a pile on which the inspired answers of the goddess were written in ancient script.[278] Stoic cosmology supported divination: there existed a *συμπάθεια* between all things, a correspondence between the human microcosm and the universal macrocosm, so that events in the heavens or phenomena on earth could be signs and portents of developments in human affairs.[279]

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[270] Maggie Hyde & M. McGuinness, *Introducing Jung* (Duxford: Icon Books, 1992; repr. 1999), p. 155.
[271] This example is taken from Maggie Hyde & M. McGuinness 1999, p. 155.
[272] Thinking of your friend does not "cause" him to ring you up, neither does your friend by picking up the phone to ring you, "cause" you to think of him.
[273] C.G. Jung (introd.), *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*, 3rd edn, trans. by Cary F. Baynes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. xix; Maggie Hyde & M. McGuinness 1999, p. 164.
[274] F. D. Peat, *The Philosopher's Stone: Chaos, Synchronicity, and the Hidden Order of the World* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), p. 3.
[275] Maggie Hyde & M. McGuinness 1999, p. 164.
[276] He wrote the introduction of a German translation of the work by R. Wilhelm.
[277] C.G. Jung 1949, p. xx.
[278] CICERO, *De div.* II. 86.
[279] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 33. See the section on divination.

The harmony and interaction among the parts of the universe could make the boy (or girl) select that particular lot which was appropriate for the particular situation.[280] Notice further that, for instance, also the liver of a sacrificial animal was merely regarded as a sign concerning the success or failure of a future event, and not the cause. Therefore, there does not have to exist necessarily a causal connection between the two, but rather the state of the liver is supposed to be 'sympathetically in tune' with the real causes.[281] According to Posidonius divination was made possible not only because of the objective correspondences between different parts of the universe but also on the basis of the seer's subjective receptivity.[282] In Cicero's *De divinatione* Quintus, the Stoic spokesman, talks a few times about a natural force, which makes prophecy possible 'instinctus divinus',[283] a power which makes it possible for the diviner to foretell.

Such ideas sound very similar to Jung's 'a-causal connection between psychic states and objective events revealing a corresponding order of the microcosm and macrocosm'.[284] Not surprisingly, the theory of synchronicity could also provide a basis for the working of astrology, just as Stoicism had done in the past. According to the astrologer, a secret, mutual connivance exists between the birth chart and the psychic state of himself.[285]

### 3.2.5. Synchronicity, the quantum theory and the chaos theory (F.D. Peat)

C.G. Jung's 'a-causal principle' of synchronicity might find support in the quantum laws, which had marked the breakdown of causality and determinism in modern physics.[286] According to F.D. Peat, 'Newton's phase space map [...] has driven synchronicity out of the universe through its absolute determinism and all-embracing power of description'.[287] Now Quantum theory offered an opportunity for synchronicity to reclaim its truthfulness.[288] Further, the insights of chaos theory challenge us to transcend the traditional duality between chaos and order.[289] They present us with a new kind of order, so rich and subtle

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[280] N.T. Pratt 1983, pp. 47-48.
[281] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 38.
[282] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 33.
[283] CICERO, *De div.* I. vi (12): 'Est enim vis et natura quaedam, quae tum observatis longo tempore significationibus, tum aliquo instinctu inflatuque divino futura praenuntiat'. '*For there is a certain natural power, which now, through long-continued observation of signs and now, through some divine excitement and inspiration, makes prophetic announcement of the future*'; so also in I. xviii (34) & xxxi (66).
[284] Jolande Jacobi 1992, p. 73.
[285] Maggie Hyde & M. McGuinness 1999, p. 163.
[286] M. Born 1995, pp. 285; Maggie Hyde & M. McGuinness 1999, p. 157.
[287] F.D. Peat 1991, p. 147.
[288] F.D. Peat 1991, p. 56.
[289] The very distinction between the randomness of chance and the determinism of law is called into question by the idea of deterministic chaos.

that it lies beyond any pattern or periodicity: chaos can thus also be perceived as an order of infinite complexity and sensitivity.[290]

By combining all these new findings of chaos theory, synchronicity and quantum theory, F.D. Peat argued in his book *The Philosopher's Stone: Chaos, Synchronicity, and the Hidden Order of the World* in favour of the existence of an order, infinitely more complex than the classical deterministic causal order. He accepts the reality of synchronicities, which become 'natural unfoldings of this underlying order of nature'.[291] This order also embraces the complexity and sensitivity of the chaotic systems, and acknowledges a-causal connections, which could account for the reality of quantum uncertainty. There exist infinite, even a-causal, interconnections within the universe, between different levels of scale and distance, but also, as illustrated by synchronicity, between mind and matter.[292] Such a density and complexity of interconnections in the universe corresponds of course much better with the present-day situation, wherein globalisation has created an incalculably intricate web of connections, causing a greater dependence between the different parts of the world.[293]

F.D. Peat advocated thus a different kind of (hidden) order from the one I. Stewart defended. The latter believes that quantum theory can still be understood within the frame of thought of a causal deterministic "order", so that, thus far, there seems to be no need to look for something else besides causality to explain reality.[294] For F.D. Peat quantum theory became one of the signs that the classical deterministic causal order was too limited a view on reality.

If F.D. Peat is right in his claim that the Western World used to focus too narrowly on the aspect of causation so that 'the flesh that once covered the bones of nature had been forgotten',[295] then it seems that we are gradually moving towards a more modern version of Stoic cosmology. Stoicism, too, seems to promise more than just the skeleton of the causal order: it regards the universe as a living organism, where its parts are clinging together

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290 F.D. Peat 1991, p. 196.
291 F.D. Peat 1991, p. 230.
292 F.D. Peat 1991, p. 148.
293 The author himself recognizes this fact: 'Every day we make decisions within a vast and ever-changing matrix of interconnections. Even the choice whether to drink tea or coffee has global implications' (F.D. Peat 1991, p. 210). The internet and mobile telephone are perhaps the latest examples of these complex and worldwide interconnections within the realm of communication, which have uncontrollable and unpredictable side effects.
294 As far as I know, I. Stewart has never discussed Jung's synchronicity. I nevertheless suspect that he would have been sceptical about its validity, since it escapes scientific verification. I do not want to suggest here that he thinks that causality can explain everything, only that he made it possible to uphold causality against the quantum theory, so that causal determinism need not yet be abandoned.
295 F.D. Peat 1991, p. 33.

through the vital *pneuma*, which imparts coherence to an integrated universe.[296] The pneumatic force holds the chain of causation together, but the *pneuma* itself is responsible for a much richer integration of the parts of the universe. They are not only connected temporally, but also spatially. The spatial connections are overlooked by the law of causation, and C.G. Jung in a sense re-introduces these with his concept of synchronicity: 'Just as causality explains the sequence of events [i.e. temporal connections], so synchronicity explains for the Chinese mentality the coinciding of events [i.e. spatial connections]'.[297] Perhaps Western science really has discarded in the past some important interconnections within the universe, besides the one laid bare by causation.

### 3.2.6. Science (chaos and quantum theory) and Theology (Elizabeth A. Johnson)

In her article, 'Does God Play Dice? Divine Providence and Chance',[298] Elizabeth A. Johnson presents a new way of understanding (the Christian) God's providential activity in the light of the new findings of modern science. According to her, most philosophers of science acknowledge that Heisenberg's uncertainty principle shows that there is an ontological indeterminacy on the sub-atomic level, and thus in reality itself, and that there is also an ontological indeterminacy in the dynamical systems (chaos theory). Lastly, evolution appears to be an unrepeatable unique process, producing randomly new forms. By taking these assumptions together, she concludes that there is no 'detailed blueprint or unfolding plan according to which the world was designed and now operates'.[299]

The traditional idea of an omnipotent and omniscient God having pre-programmed the world becomes therefore less tenable. Yet, God's providence can still be compatible with genuine chance and randomness. Elizabeth A. Johnson finds that the ideas of Thomas Aquinas leave room for chance occurrences, which are a result of His gift of genuine autonomy to His creations, allowing them their own integrity, without reserve.

> Divine purpose is accomplished in a *concursus* or flowing together of divine and creaturely act (primary and secondary causes) in which the latter mediates the former. Faith can affirm that God works not only through the deep regularities of the laws of

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[296] Michael Lapidge, 'Stoic Cosmology', in *The Stoics*, ed. by J.M. Rist (Berkeley: University of California press, 1978), pp. 161-185 (pp. 169-175).

[297] C.G. Jung (intr.), *I Tjing: Het boek der veranderingen* trans. by A. Hochberg-van Wallinga from Richard Wilhelm's book *I Ging: Das Buch der Wandlungen* (Düsseldorf: Eugen Diedrichs Verlag, 1924), trans. from the English edition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, n.d.) (Amsterdam: L.J. Veen, 1953; Deventer: Ankh-Hermes 1991), p. xix: 'Zoals de causaliteit de opeenvolging der gebeurtenissen verklaart, zo verklaart de synchroniciteit voor de Chinese mentaliteit het samenvallen der gebeurtenissen'.

[298] *Theological Studies* 57 (1996), 3-18.

[299] Elizabeth A. Johnson 1996, p. 7.

> nature but also through chance occurrences which has its own, genuinely random integrity.[300]

The natural creativity of chance itself can be thought of as a mode of divine creativity in which it participates. One of the suggestions for a new metaphor to capture God's providential relation to the workings of chance is that God is 'like a jazz player, inspired by the spirit of the audience and the night to improvise riffs upon a basic melody'.[301]

It is interesting to confront Elizabeth A. Johnson's views on modern science with those of I. Stewart, one of the leading authorities on the chaos theory. Her insistence that philosophers would say that chaos theory is a sign of inherent indeterminacy goes against I. Stewart's statement that all chaotic processes remain within a deterministic causal order. Unpredictability does not necessarily mean indeterminacy. As argued before, even quantum mechanics might still be explained as a deterministic process, so that God might actually be able to predict when a certain atom would decay. Further, she refrains from defining 'genuine chance', which ought to be necessarily different from statistical chance, since the latter falls within a deterministic frame of thought.

She assumes, along with many philosophers, that it is impossible for evolution to repeat itself in exactly the same way, when starting from the same initial conditions. This issue receives a more cautious handling by I. Stewart:

> If you run a deterministic model twice from the same initial state, it will do the same thing both times. [...] Whether we think our universe as a whole is random [or deterministic] becomes a trifle moot, since we can't actually run the entire universe twice from the same initial conditions.[302]

The Stoics believed that this was precisely what happened at regular intervals of time: after each conflagration, exactly the same things would take place as before, and history keeps repeating itself in cycles.[303]

One of the main advantages in allowing 'genuine chance' (understood as an uncaused event) into the world, while maintaining God's providence, is that God seems to acknowledge more fully man's autonomy and freedom: 'God uses chance, so to speak, to ensure variety, resilience, novelty, and freedom in the universe, right up to humanity itself'.[304] The idea that chance gives freedom to humanity is of course not new. Already the Epicureans expressed the idea that the reality of genuine chance events (the spontaneous swerve of the atoms) can secure man's free will.

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[300] Elizabeth A. Johnson 1996, p. 15.
[301] Elizabeth A. Johnson 1996, p. 17.
[302] I. Stewart 1997, p. 281.
[303] Marcia L. Colish 1985, I, p. 24.
[304] Elizabeth A. Johnson 1996, p. 15.

# 4. (NEO-)PLATONISM

## 4.1. Changes in Society during the Late Roman Empire

The Roman empire went through turbulent times during the third century AD, especially between the murder of the emperor Alexander Severus in AD 235 and the accession of Diocletian in AD 284. Continued barbarian raids increased the pressure on the Rhine and Danube. Internally, there existed a violent political instability, illustrated by the rapid turnover of emperors and the rounds of ruinous civil wars between rival claimants for the purple.[1] Meanwhile, the continuous depreciation of the silver *denarius* as an *ad hoc* solution for the government's growing money deficit had disastrous consequences for the economy.[2]

Diocletian (AD 284-305) and Constantine (AD 306-337) became the two main architects of a restored stability within a reorganized Roman state, which no longer rested on its traditional foundations. The new system of government would in time reveal its own weaknesses: when after the death of Theodosius I (AD 395) the empire came under renewed external pressure, it was unable to halt the erosion of Roman imperial control in the West.[3]

On his deathbed Septimius Severus (AD 193-211) had given the cynical advice to his sons: '*Enrich the soldiers and despise all others*'.[4] The army played an increasingly important role during the *Principate*, and to have sufficient military support became crucial for an emperor's position.[5] Numerous rulers were murdered by the army, killed in civil war, or eliminated by the Guards. The army itself frequently proclaimed a new emperor from among its officers, excluding the Roman Senate from the procedure. The initial idea that the *princeps* ought to

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[1] Succession always proved a difficult problem to solve. The populace and the army strongly favoured the hereditary principle; senators on the other hand were against it, partly because sons of emperors were often unsuitable for the job and disrespectful to the senate, and partly because of their traditionally strong aversion for anything that reminds of monarchical rule (A.H.M. Jones, *The Decline of the Ancient World* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1966), p. 13).

[2] A. Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire AD 284-430* (London, Fontana Press, 1993), pp. 3-6; A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), I, pp. 15-32.

[3] S. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery* (New York: Batsford, 1985; London: Routledge, 1997), p. 209; P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971; repr. 1997) nuances the so-called fall of the Western empire: 'The "Decline and Fall" affected only the political structure of the western provinces of the Roman empire' (p. 19). So also M.T.W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 7-8 & p. 163: 'What was it that the invasions caused to collapse? The central imperial administration'.

[4] DIO, LXXVII (LXXVI) 15.2, quoted by J.H.G.W. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 226.

[5] G. Alföldy, *The Social History of Rome*, trans. by D. Braund and F. Pollock, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 172.

be *primus inter pares* lost most, if not all, of its true meaning;[6] several of the "soldier emperors" of the third century came from a humble provincial background, and they did not share the ethos of the Senate. On the other hand, the nobility was less and less inclined to take up a military career and get involved in the haphzard and demanding politics of war. The decision of Gallienus (AD 260-268) to exclude senators from all military commands[7] was therefore not necessarily a radical measure, but more a formal confirmation of how army posts were being filled anyway.

### 4.1.1. Diocletian (AD 284-305)

So it became possible for the Illyrian Diocles, born of obscure parentage, to work his way up in the army and to be elected emperor in AD 284. Considering his humble background, it is perhaps not surprising that during his reign the senatorial order was hit the hardest.[8] Diocles, who changed his name to Diocletian, took drastic measures, which nevertheless must be seen in the light of developments already happening for some time.[9] His reorganization of the Roman state would undergo under Constantine some further crucial developments.

#### 1. General Reformative Measures

During his reign, Diocletian considerably expanded the size of the army, and heightened the degree of control and bureaucratisation of the empire. This was necessary for the marvellous engine of taxation he had put in place. With the extra income he could finance his vast army.[10] The increase of imperial administration required many new civil servants. Their recruitment contributed to the growth of social mobility within Roman society. His new way of government is usually referred to as the 'Dominate', whereby the emperor did not present himself any longer as *princeps*, but rather as *dominus*, someone who governed his

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[6] According to the senate the emperor should be the best man of the state, which to them meant: a leading and senior senator. (A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 13)

[7] A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 16.

[8] For instance, the chapter with the colourful title 'Diocletian, Hammer of the Aristocracy' in M.T.W. Arnheim 1972, pp. 39-48. The disregard for senators in filling imperial posts might well be a natural consequence of the closer connection between the emperor and the army and the fact that also the geographical link between the seat of the emperor and "senatorial Rome" was weakened (A. Cameron 1993, p. 7); see further on in this chapter.

[9] P. Brown 1971, p. 25. The lack of sufficient information about the period before his reign (J.G.H.W. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 230) almost inevitably makes Diocletian's measures look more innovative and drastic than they actually may have been.

[10] A.H.M. Jones (1964, II, p. 1046) stresses the link between the maintenance of much bigger army forces and an increased administration to obtain the necessary funds.

empire as a mighty lord in a new, elevated position.[11] This stricter central control of the emperor over his subjects inevitably made the new regime appear more coercive and oppressive.

## 2. The Loss of Political Power of the Senatorial Nobility

Under Diocletian, little remained of the political power the Senate once enjoyed. Already being excluded from the military posts in favour of the equestrian order,[12] the senatorial nobility was now squeezed out of the high civil posts, most importantly the provincial governorships. At the end of the third century, the equestrians accordingly outstripped the senatorial nobility in political power, so that they became *de facto* the new elite within a reorganized empire.[13]

The influence of the senatorial nobility on the emperor was further weakened because Rome, the seat of the senate, lost in importance. Diocletian divided the empire into an eastern and western part, and this would become, apart from a few intervals, a permanent feature. He created a tetrarchy in an attempt to solve the problem of imperial succession, appointing two Augusti (one for each part of the empire) and two Caesars who would succeed in due course. The emperor of the western part preferred to reside in strategically more suitable places than Rome for the defence of the empire.[14] Several new imperial "capitals" emerged, such as Trier, Milan and later Ravenna, resplendent with imperial buildings, so that Rome's status diminished.[15] Moreover, the physical distance between imperial court and Senate underscored the growing divergence between the now overtly monarchical rule of the emperor, and the traditionally republican sentiment of the senatorial nobility. As a result, the ideologically close tie between emperor and Senate during the *Principate*, - he was supposed to be "*primus inter pares*" - dissolved by all these changes.

The position of the nobility seemed to have been seriously weakened at the beginning of the fourth century: the Senate had hardly any say in the choice of the emperor or in his policy; the public career of senators had been seriously clipped, since not only military posts

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[11] A. Cameron 1993, p. 2. The author (p. 42) points out that divine worship of the emperor had its precedents in previous centuries. See also the discussion on the "Dominate" by M.T.W. Arnheim 1972, pp. 3-4.

[12] On this see A. Demandt, 'Der spätrömische Militäradel', *Chiron* 10 (1980), 609-618 (pp. 610-611).

[13] G. Alföldy 1988, p. 166; A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 271.

[14] Whereas Cicero (*De republica* II. 1-11) could extol Romulus' wise choice of location for the foundation of Rome, - '*He chose an incredibly advantageous site for the city*' and '*A city founded in some other part of Italy could hardly have held so easily such vast political power*' -, since the changed circumstances of the third century, the opinion of emperors was clearly different. Notice that it is conceivable that Virgil, too, is stressing the importance of finding the most suitable location to found a city for a community, when he is talking about finding a good spot for a beehive at the beginning of book IV in the *Georgics*. The fact that he later will call the bees "Quirites" (l. 201) only confirms this interpretation. When Constantine later founded his "New Rome" in the east (Constantinople), he certainly took heed of Virgil's advice.

[15] A. Cameron 1993, pp. 42-43; G. Alföldy 1988, p. 188.

but now also many civil jobs became inaccessible to them; the magnificent status of Rome, the centre of the *respublica* according to senators, had been abandoned by the Roman emperors.

### 3. Continued Prominent Position of the Nobility in Roman Society

Nevertheless, even in this period the nobility remained a powerful elite in society.[16] Despite their loss of direct political influence within the Senate, they still enjoyed enormous prestige in public life. Although the soldier emperors of the third century had carried out substantial reforms to the detriment of the nobility, they did not reject traditional Roman ideology, which recognized the honoured status of the ancient nobility. Thus, even though the Senate no longer wielded any tangible political power, the senators' high prestige in representing the traditional elite of the Roman state was being upheld.

Another reason why many of the ancient nobility did not lose their elevated position in society pertains to the substantial role they played in private life. By and large they were great landowners, and the crisis of the third century had not seriously affected their wealth. Affluent members of the nobility could even profit from the worsened general situation by cheaply buying up property of small landowners who had been ruined during the turbulent times.[17] Intermarriages among wealthy senatorial families furthered the concentration of landed property into the hands of a privileged few.[18] Even the growing burden of the fiscal system did not affect the nobility in proportion to their vast wealth, due to the privileges they still enjoyed.

## 4.1.2. Constantine (AD 306-337)

During his long reign, Constantine (AD 306-337) practically concluded the radical transformation of the Roman world. In some aspects he seemed to have departed from the policy of Diocletian. Constantine gave priority to a single first-class mobile army attached to the emperor. He separated these troops from the *limitanei*, the provincial border militia.[19] Also the problem of succession was solved differently. Whereas Diocletian chose two Augusti and two Caesars to ensure a smooth change of power, Constantine reverted back to hereditary succession in a unified empire.

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[16] A. Chastagnol, 'L'évolution de l'ordre sénatorial aux III^e^ et IV^e^ siècles de notre ère', *Revue Historique* 244 (1970), p. 306; G. Alföldi 1988, p. 163.
[17] A. Chastagnol 1970, p. 306; M.T.W. Arnheim 1972, p. 51.
[18] S. Williams 1985, p. 214.
[19] This meant that ultimately protection of the throne took precedence over protection of the provinces (S. Williams 1985, p. 207).

## 1. The New Imperial Aristocracy

Constantine allowed the senatorial nobility once more access to important offices of the imperial service.[20] He upgraded, for instance, many provincial governorships from the rank of *praeses* (equestrian rank) to that of *consularis* (senatorial rank).[21] In doing so, he acknowledged that the senatorial status should effectively be the highest social rank in the Roman empire. He further expanded the senatorial order, partly by appointing commoners to the senatorial posts, who thereby received automatically the title of *clarissimus*,[22] and partly by enrolling equestrian magistrates and their sons in the Senate via *adlectio*.[23] Consequently, the equestrian order lost in standing and gradually disappeared, being absorbed upwards into the senatorial order, and downwards into the curial class.

Constantine's recognition of the senatorial nobility as the elite of Roman society did not mean a restoration of senatorial political power,[24] or a return to old privileges. Rather, the traditional nobility was gradually integrated within a new and expanded imperial aristocracy, the *clarissimi*,[25] wherein rank was based on the posts occupied within the imperial service, and no longer on birth or independent landed wealth.[26] Consequently, the dignified senatorial nobility turned into a service nobility.[27]

The influx of many new *clarissimi* led to a devaluation of this rank. A growing differentiation and proliferation of senatorial titles made the senators more zealous for higher honours.[28] The strict internal hierarchy that arose during the later half of the fourth century was based on the office or honorary title one managed to obtain within the imperial service. Only the highest posts were being rewarded with the most prestigious title, *illustris*. Next came the rank of *spectabiles*, and below them the ordinary *clarissimi*, among whom provincial *consulares* and senators who had held no official post, active or honorary. At the end of the fourth century, *praesides* of provinces also became *clarissimi*.[29] From around this time, only *illustres* were given certain fiscal and other privileges previously granted to the

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[20] The importance of this step is well highlighted by A. Chastagnol (1970, p. 308); see also A. Cameron 1993, p. 54.
[21] A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 272.
[22] With senatorial rank directly attached to the top jobs anyone who rose high enough would automatically obtain it (S. Williams 1997, p. 206).
[23] A. Chastagnol 1970, p. 309.
[24] S. Williams 1985, p. 206; it is indicative that Constantine no longer obliged newly appointed senators to reside in Rome and attend the senate (A. Cameron 1993, p. 54).
[25] Senators were called thus since Hadrian during the second century (A. Chastagnol 1970, p. 307).
[26] S. Williams 1985, pp. 206-207.
[27] A. Cameron 1993, p. 104.
[28] M.T.W. Arnheim 1972, p. 10.
[29] A. Cameron 1993, pp. 103-104; A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 143; A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 550; Augustine's worldly ambitions made him dream of becoming a *praesidatus*, a governor of a minor province. (*Confessiones* VI. xi (19)) He probably would have obtained senatorial rank.

whole senatorial order.[30] Only the title *clarissimus* was made hereditary, so that the son of an *illustris* always had to work himself up through office to obtain the same rank as his father and to enjoy his privileges.[31]

Many noblemen were in this way obliged to take up civil office in the imperial service to maintain or improve their official standing within the new imperial aristocracy.[32] Whether the appointee fulfilled his task efficiently can be seriously doubted: often a senator who took up the post of provincial governor had also private interests (read: land estates and connections) in the province concerned, so that frequently self-interest infringed on public responsibility.[33] Constantine's decision to give the governorship of many provinces senatorial status accelerated thus the process of growth in regional private power of the landed nobility. A landlord was virtually an autocrat on his estates. The emperor became increasingly tied to these wealthy landowners.[34] During their office, provincial governors tried to recuperate their *suffragium*,[35] i.e. the money necessary for securing their post. This contributed to the harsh and unjust treatment of provincials.[36]

Possibly Constantine wanted to form a more compliant and publicly active aristocracy in the new State he envisaged. The imperial aristocracy would be more involved in the running of the empire, rather than profiting from the State as a detached, wealthy group of landowners. In this way, some limited control could be exercised on this powerful privileged group. The problem was that the ancient nobility of Rome was not necessarily prepared to demonstrate the same traditional zeal for public office once this amounted to imperial service. It is significant that the new Senate at Constantinople proved to be more efficient, more cooperative, and, of necessity, more subservient towards the emperor, who resided in the same place. The western emperor had it more difficult persuading the wealthier, and more independent, self-righteous group of senators at Rome to perform their public duties within his "new *respublica*".[37]

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[30] A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 280.
[31] M.T.W. Arnheim 1972, p. 10.
[32] A. Cameron 1993, p. 104.
[33] J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court: AD 364-425* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 23 & p. 29: 'They [= senators] seem also to have used office, to a large extent, in order to foster their interests, as private persons who possessed local connections and property in the provinces which they governed'. See also A.M.H. Jones 1964, II, p. 1066: 'These great noblemen were naturally tender to the interests of their own class, and were on the whole inefficient administrators'.
[34] S. Williams (1985, p. 210) sees this as one of the principal reasons why the imperial government was undermined from within, pointing out that also the upper clergymen were great landowners.
[35] On *suffragium* see A.H.M. Jones 1964, I, pp. 391-396. The system soon became corrupt, and developed effectively into the sale of offices, with varied attempts of emperors to bring this unwelcome outgrowth under control.
[36] A.H.M. Jones 1964, I, p. 399.
[37] On the different position of the nobility in Rome and Constantinople, see at the end of this chapter.

## 2. INCREASED SOCIAL MOBILITY

From the time of Constantine on, excellent opportunities arose for Roman citizens to obtain the rank of *clarissimus*. Success of securing provincial governorships or in obtaining honorary codicils depended largely on having influential friends, and/or on paying the required *suffragium*.[38] The great majority of new entrants to the Senate came from the highest strata of the *curiae*, the members of city councils. They were usually rich landowners with a liberal education, and thus not much different from the Roman senators themselves.[39] Constantine did not require from these new senatorial members to reside in Rome or to attend meetings of the Senate,[40] so that the traditional link between an imperial *clarissimus* and the Roman senate was being weakened. Many new senators actually did not want to reside in Rome, but preferred to live on one of their estates in the countryside, or in their home town.[41]

The greater social mobility of that period[42] had also a downside: a bureaucracy functions best within a static society, especially when it comes to taxation. From Constantine on, repeated attempts were made to tie a vast amount of the population to their inherited position in society, especially the *coloni* and *decurions*, who were vital links in the taxation system.[43] The infiltration of the most wealthy and eminent *decurions* into the new aristocracy, which released them from their municipal duties, depleted the *curiae* of their wealthiest members.[44] This increased the (financial) burden on the remaining, poorer members of the city councils, so that they in turn desperately tried to escape their worsened situation.[45] Legislation at the end of the fourth century ordered that *decurions*, even if they had obtained the title of *clarissimus*, were obliged to fulfil their municipal duties as well. It did not discourage them from pursuing senatorial rank.[46] The legal and social advantages the title *clarissimus* implied - for instance, postponement of paying taxes and better protection against the habitual ruthless behaviour of provincial governors - made it still worthwhile to become a *vir clarissimus*.[47] One of the other escape routes for a *decurion* was to join the Christian clergy, since they were under Constantine' s law (AD 313) exempted from

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[38] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 743: 'While it was possible for a relatively poor man to rise in the imperial service by merit, it was more normal to obtain offices by interest or bribery, and only those with aristocratic connections and ample means could pull the necessary strings and afford the substantial *suffragia* required'.
[39] A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 278.
[40] A. Cameron 1993, p. 54.
[41] A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 279.
[42] A. Demandt (1980, pp. 611-614) has a very good section on the increased social mobility and the aspects involved.
[43] A. Cameron 1993, p. 55.
[44] J. Matthews 1975, p. 103.
[45] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 756.
[46] A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 280.
[47] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 750; A.H.M. Jones 1966, pp. 280-281.

service on the town councils.[48] Another way to enjoy immunity from curial obligations was to become a doctor, or professor of rhetoric or grammar in the service of a city.[49]

### 4.1.3. The Dawn of a New Imperial Ideology: Constantine's conversion to Christianity

Constantine also departed from Diocletian's policy in the religious domain. Whereas the latter had persecuted the Christians, Constantine, quite the opposite, adopted this religion and consequently favoured it in his regime. Here we come perhaps closest to the introduction of a new imperial ideology for the "*respublica*".[50] Constantine remained careful not to alienate the majority of his subjects, and especially not the overwhelmingly pagan Roman nobility. He therefore showed tolerance towards the traditional Roman religion, but nevertheless urged all his subjects to embrace Christianity.

#### 1. The Importance of Roman Religion to the Senatorial Nobility

Roman religion was indissoluble from traditional ideology. A.H.M. Jones states: 'Its myths and ritual were inextricably intertwined with the great literary heritage of Greece and Rome, which was dear to all educated men, and with the glorious traditions of the Roman state'.[51] This tradition was essential for the nobleman's self-identity[52] and served as validation for his inherited privileged position within society. By harking back to the past and claiming descent from illustrious parentage he could claim particular standing within society, or in the words of A. Alföldi: 'The noble body [...] fed on the prestige of the ancient past'.[53] Once *mos maiorum*, or the greatness of Cato or Scipio Aemilianus was being questioned, the underpinning of a senator's main beliefs and standing in society came under threat. Only at a time when the emperor was considerably detached from traditional Roman thought, could he have introduced a new imperial ideology departing from *mos maiorum*.[54]

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[48] A. Cameron 1993, p. 55; A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 745; A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 288. When Augustine was ordained presbyter, in AD 391 he was formally exempted from his curial duties.

[49] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, pp. 745 & 998. Augustine probably enjoyed this immunity as a teacher of grammar in his hometown Thagaste (AD 374 – AD 376) and as a professor of rhetoric in Carthage (AD 376 – AD 383), and Milan (AD 384 – AD 386), but not in Rome (AD 383 – AD 384), where he seemed to have been a self-employed teacher.

[50] C.N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine*, rev. edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944; New York: Galaxy Book, 1961), pp. 177-212) chose "The New Republic" as heading for his chapter on Constantine.

[51] A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 324.

[52] A. Cameron 1993, p. 156.

[53] A. Alföldi, *A Conflict of Ideas in the Late Roman Empire: The Clash between the Senate and Valentinian I*, trans. by H. Mattingly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 96.

[54] Also A. Cameron (1993, p. 43) states that the neglect of Rome by the emperors 'greatly weakened the hold of Roman tradition on government and administration and in a sense freed Diocletian and his colleagues and successors to introduce innovations'.

The nobility probably found it easier to accept the emperor's secession from their traditional belief, now that he had become a more distant figure. For them, Rome and the Senate was their centre of attention, and locally they seemed to have gained more independence ever since the emperor decided no longer to reside in "their" eternal city.[55]

## 2. The Controversy around the Altar of *Victoria*

Once Roman religion became increasingly marginalized, opposition against the domineering position of Christianity was bound to be strongest amongst the "true guardians" of the ancient tradition.[56] This happened, for instance, when the emperor Gratian removed the altar of the goddess Victoria from the Senate house in AD 384.[57] Staunch pagan Roman senators, headed by the prefect Symmachus, appealed to keep this old relic of Roman history in its rightful place.[58] The sentimental value of this altar for the prestigious senatorial group must not be underestimated. These noble, cultivated men embodied their great tradition, and tried to preserve it.

The controversy around the Altar of the goddess Victoria in the Senate can be regarded as an incident wherein two ideologies, the new imperial Christian, and the ancient senatorial pagan, collided on a matter that had above all symbolic value. Christianity had become a serious threat to the senators' traditional cult, which constituted an essential part of their identity. A senator in a society without the backing of traditional republican ideology was "merely" a wealthy, private landowner, who could no longer pride himself on automatically belonging to "partem meliorem humani generis".[59] Bishop Ambrose dashed the unrealistic hopes that their traditional religion could still have a place under the changed conditions of the Roman empire (read: new ideology). To him, 'the ancient, once universally respected state religion, [...] was now only an archaic survival, the outdated enthusiasm of a local minority'.[60]

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[55] The prestige of the senators must have risen from the time when the emperors left Rome, because then the emperors 'were no longer their rivals on their own ground' (J. Matthews 1975, p. 30).

[56] A. Alföldi 1952, p. 97.

[57] The altar was installed by Augustus, removed by Constantius II in AD 357, probably restored by Julian, and again removed by Gratian in AD 384.

[58] The rhetor Quintus Aurelius Symmachus (AD 345 – 405) was the author of the famous *relatio* addressed to Gratian, asking for the restoration of the Altar of the goddess Victoria in AD 384. The same year he recommended Augustine for the seat of rhetoric at Milan (AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* V.xiii (23)). His letters have come down to us in ten books, and he is a participant in the (fictive) discourse of Macrobius' *Saturnalia.*

[59] '*The better part of the human race*' (SYMMACHUS, *Epistulae* I, 52).

[60] J. Matthews 1975, p. 207, quoting Ambrose, *Ep.* 18.2: 'pretiosa et grandia sonant, veri effeta defendunt.' The contrast between the emperor's attitude towards the empire and that of the senate towards Rome is well brought out in the book of A. Alföldi (1952). See especially chapter V: 'The Late Classical Ideal of Culture in Conflict with the Illyrian Military Staff' (pp. 96-124).

At the time of Constantine, some of the crucial differences between the two ideologies had not yet been made clear. Eusebius' view on history[61] and Constantine's practical attitude towards Christianity illustrate that the worship of the Christian God in certain areas merely replaced the ancient gods of Rome, for instance, in ensuring (worldly) success for the Roman empire.[62] Constantine remained an elevated universal monarch in the line of his predecessors, and felt no need to portray himself as a humble Christian penitent.[63] He even tried to graft the alien religion of Christianity upon Roman tradition, for instance, by putting forward his famous Christian interpretation of Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*, implying that even the most Roman of all Latin poets had envisaged the coming of Christ.[64] It would take the acumen of Augustine to be able to sharply identify the fundamental ideological differences between Christianity and the Roman tradition, whereby he demolished the pagan myth of eternal Rome.[65]

### 4.1.4. Constantinople and Rome

When Constantine inaugurated in AD 330 the city of Constantinople, his new capital in the east, he originally intended it to be an imperial residence. Gradually, Constantinople became a rival to Rome. The many privileges Rome enjoyed were now also bestowed upon this "New Rome" of the east. Constantine issued free corn to its citizens, and Constantius II (337-361) established an eastern Senate.[66]

One of the internal factors leading to the disappearance of the imperial system in the West, while the eastern empire continued to exist for another thousand years, concerned the role of the nobility.[67] The Roman nobility was much more independent than its

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[61] C.N. Cochrane 1944, pp. 184-186. Eusebius' s view on history, and in particular the difference from Augustine, will be discussed in the chapter on *De civitate Dei*. See also the excellent article on the issue from G.F. Chesnut, 'The Pattern of the Past: Augustine's Debate with Eusebius and Sallust', in *Our Common History as Christians: Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler*, ed. by J, Deschner, L.T. Howe, K. Penzel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 69-95 (esp. pp. 70-76).

[62] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 292: 'The basic conception was Roman rather than Christian. Constantine wished to maintain the *pax deorum* as his predecessors had done, but he looked to a new divinity and for new procedures to maintain it'.

[63] S. Williams 1985, p. 206.

[64] On how this poem was christianised, see P. Courcelle, 'Les exégèses chrétiennes de la quatrième éclogue', *Revue des études anciennes* 59 (1957), 294-319.

[65] P. Brown 1971, p. 121. It is symptomatic that the idealisation of Rome in literature (*Roma aeterna*) was created in the fourth and fifth century AD (P. Brown 1971, p. 120), i.e. when the city had already lost its standing on the political scene.

[66] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 688.

[67] J. Matthews 1975, p. 7: 'The aristocracy was essentially a centrifugal force, which helped to undermine the position of the imperial administration from within while war and invasion threatened it from outside'.

counterpart in the east: 'No huge and powerful group [in Constantinople] was able to sidetrack the imperial government on a massive scale in the way the western nobility did'.[68]

In the east, the senators were better integrated into the imperial system, and more ready to cooperate. Only after many generations a more independent senatorial body can be discerned.[69] There was no ancient core of independent minded senators as there was at Rome:[70] all eastern senators owed their new position mainly to the emperor. In the east, emperor and Senate resided in the same place, and this tied their fate more strongly together.[71]

There was a strong conservatism among western senators, which came to the surface in their more deep-seated opposition to Christianity.[72] In the east there was a long Hellenistic tradition of divine monarchy, which made it easier to accept the emperor's domineering position. The Roman nobleman seemed to have held on to his own republican ideology and traditions, even when the State had moved away to a new imperial system.[73] He further abhorred the uncultured soldier-emperors.[74]

The eastern senators were less wealthy in comparison with the imensely rich Roman senators: by 400 AD, most of Gaul and Italy was owned by less than a dozen great senatorial clans. This dangerous concentration of private wealth in the west contrasted sharply with the weakness of the western government itself.[75] Their wealth allowed the western nobility to negotiate with the State from an increasingly strong position,[76] and they were undoubtedly more concerned about their own family fortunes, than the condition of the empire as a whole.[77] P. Brown gives us a striking example: 'At exactly the same time as western senators were allowed by their ruler to burn their tax-arrears, the senators of Constantinople were being made to sell their wives' jewellery to pay for the subsidies that eventually brought down the empire of Stilicho'.[78]

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[68] S. Williams 1985, p. 215.
[69] J. Matthews 1975, p. 6.
[70] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 551.
[71] A.H.M. Jones 1964, I, p. 329.
[72] P. Brown 1971, p. 197.
[73] See further section 3.3.1.
[74] This is well brought out by A. Alföldi (1952), making use of the work on the emperors of the pro-senatorial Sextus Aurelius Victor, who wrote during the reign of Constantius II (AD 337-361).
[75] A. Cameron 1993, p. 118.
[76] S. Williams 1985, p. 213.
[77] S. Williams 1985, p. 215.
[78] P. Brown 1971, p. 140.

# 4.2. The Success of Oriental Mystery Religions and the Mystical Philosophy of (Neo-)Platonism

## 4.2.1. Growing Discontent with one's Fate

### 1. THE CHAOTIC THIRD CENTURY

The turbulent times of the third century may have contributed to the waning of belief in a Stoic materialistic worldview, wherein the goodness of the deity's providence assured the justice behind the events guided through *fatum*. However, it is true that Stoicism had already evolved under Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180) to a 'joyless, austere and arduous' philosophy, scarcely capable of providing any satisfaction in life.[79] Possibly one of the problems emerging during the second century AD was the need of a personal identity and autonomy for the individual within a vast Roman empire. Stoicism remained too impersonal to provide any satisfaction in this area.

### 2. THE RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION

Here, it seems necessary to take into account to what extent the many imperial laws of the central government actually were successful. The sheer repetition and the increasingly harsher punishments for disobedience are indeed a sign of the inefficiency of these regulations in practice. They reveal the lack of control the emperor had over major processes in society, of which he had no clue about their underlying causes.[80]

The overall psychological impact of a central government putting in place substantial social and moral restrictions on its subjects, irrespective of their efficiency, must not be underestimated. This aspect of central imperial policy could have been perceived as the reflection of an anonymous, all-embracing rigid fate, whether astral or Stoic. Through the regulations entire groups of the population, such as *coloni* (tenants), *decurions* (members of town councils) and craftsmen were compelled to remain in their function, no matter how miserable their life actually was. In the past, generation after generation of *decurions* had fulfilled their duty in society willingly, and in return their community honoured them for this. Now that the once valued civic *honores* increasingly evolved into compulsory offices,

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[79] Cited from J.G.H.W. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 213. 'If Marcus Aurelius was in any sense typical of the Roman senatorial class of his time', J.G.H.W. Liebeschuetz continues, 'it would seem that Stoicism had come near the end of its usefulness to the Roman nobility.'

[80] A. Cameron 1993, pp.45-46 & 169.

unenthusiastic *decurions* regarded their duties as *onera invita*.[81] Even the ancient nobility was soon embroiled in this vast imperial compulsory system, so that it, too, came to regard public office (read: imperial service) as a burden. Further, the little control the Senate had exercised in the past over Roman policy was mainly lost during the turbulent third century AD. The greater dependence of the nobleman on the emperor's favour for his position in society reduced the feeling of control over an important aspect in his life.

The issue of free will became the more urgent when numerous laws explicitly curbed people's freedom of action. What used to be done spontaneously in civic life now became compulsory.[82] Thus, irrespective of how unsuccessful the imperial laws in practice might have been, the overall impression was given that a central authoritarian system was strictly controlling and constraining one's life in domains previously left untouched.

### 4.2.2. Isis Cult & Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

Already in the second century AD, a search for greater fulfilment in one's personal life through mystery religions was well under way.[83] In his Roman novel *Metamorphoses*, the (Middle-)Platonist Apuleius (AD *c.* 123 – after 158) provided a philosophical basis for the working of the Isis cult. In the story the Egyptian goddess Isis freed the central character Lucius from his donkey shape and from the vicissitudes of *Fortuna*. Lucius claims in the novel that Isis could influence *fatum*, *Fortuna*, and astral fate:

> ... dexteram, qua fatorum etiam inextricabiliter contorta retractas licia et Fortunae tempestates mitigas et stellarum noxios meatus cohibes.[84]
>
> *With that hand you [i.e. Isis] even wind back the threads of the Fates, however irretrievably twisted, and you appease the storms raised by Fortuna, and restrain the harmful courses of the stars.*

The contrast with Stoicism is apparent here: whereas a Stoic has to learn to bear himself nobly before the blows of *Fortuna* and accept his fate, the goddess Isis could free an individual from *Fortuna*'s tyranny, and even alter the decrees of the *Fates* to his benefit.[85]

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[81] This is an almost literally quotation from G. Alföldi 1988, p. 170; see also p. 176.
[82] S. Williams 1985, p. 147.
[83] S. Williams 1985, p. 158: 'At the height of peace and prosperity, people were already flocking to the mysteries, as Marcus Aurelius' initiation at Eleusis illustrated'.
[84] *Metamorphoses* XI. 25.
[85] For instance, Isis claims that she can prolong someone's life beyond the appointed time of *fatum*:
'Quodsi sedulis obsequiis et religiosis ministeriis et tenacibus castimoniis numen nostrum promerueris, scies ultra statuta fato tuo spatia vitam quoque tibi prorogare mihi tantum licere.' (XI. 6)
'*But if you deserve to win my divine approval by diligent service, you will come to know that I alone can prolong your life even here on earth beyond the years appointed by your destiny.*'
J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (1979, p. 182) writes: 'The initiate of Isis was born afresh. This meant that secure under the patronage of Isis, and no longer subject to fate, he became the real master of his life and could make a new start'. The literary aspects and the role of *Fortuna* in Apuleius's novel will be further discussed in the chapter on Augustine's *Confessiones*.

The attraction of oriental mystery religions such as the Isis cult in the Roman empire can only partly be explained by the third century crisis.[86] Nonetheless, the calamities might have pointed to the failure of the traditional protective gods of the State to bring *felicitas*. The individual must have felt increasingly lost in the anonymity of an increasingly centrally-governed, vast empire.[87] The intensified centralisation and bureaucracy of the imperial regime during the third and fourth centuries, borne out by its many coercive laws, most likely fuelled a desire for individual salvation from such a forceful grip. This, the traditional State gods could not provide.[88]

## 4.2.3. Plotinian (Neo-)Platonism:

## The Distinguished Road to Happiness for an Intellectual Elite

### 1. THE POSITING OF A TRANSCENDENTAL REALM

Not only oriental mystery religions promised escape from *fatum*. A growing dissatisfaction with life, and a general deterioration of society, widened the gulf between what the existing ideology was promising, and what the tangible reality appeared to be. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz notices among the educated in this period 'a loss of interest in the contemporary world by authors and readers of secular literature especially in the Latin-speaking parts of the empire.'[89] Dissatisfied with the conditions in which one was expected to fulfil one's duty in society, a growing "atomic self-interest" could be perceived, exemplified by wealthy landowners who were more interested in cultivating their private villas.[90] Such state of affairs became a breeding-ground for Platonic thought. (Neo-)Platonists looked further than the physical world, which they regarded to be merely 'an image of its ideal archetype'.[91] Their idea of *virtus* was concerned with introspection, so that automatically much attention was given to the individual in his private life, as opposed to the traditional idea of *virtus* in performing one's public duty in society.

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[86] R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p. 7.
[87] S. Williams 1985, p. 158.
[88] The imperial regime itself, responsible for the increasingly severe moral and social regulation, justified its power still on the traditional ideology. There seemed to be therefore no way out from the state of affairs via this tradition. C.N. Cochrane (1944) correctly draws in his book attention to the gradual exhaustion of the model of *Romanitas* in the continuous attempts to deal with the problems that were inherent in the ideology itself; so also G. Alföldi (1988, p. 183), in more colourful rhetoric: 'The old value system of Roman society had failed in the great crisis: a concern for tradition, a political ethic and imperial cult could no longer provide intellectual, spiritual and moral orientation for a society that was collapsing, tortured by poverty, warfare and not least, by its own state system'.
[89] J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 231.
[90] S. Williams 1985, p. 147.
[91] Words from R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 9.

The philosopher Plotinus (AD 204/5 - 270) stood at the dawn of the revival of Platonic philosophy in the Roman world. His mystical rendering of the ancient Greek philosophy is nowadays being labelled (Neo-)Platonism.[92] He thereby tried to 'solve the spiritual problems of his own day in terms of traditional Greek rationalism'.[93]

Belief in a Platonic transcendental realm provided an alternative for the unsatisfactory materialistic philosophies, such as Epicureanism and Stoicism.[94] His system managed to avoid a Stoic fatalistic determinism, the results of which now proved insufferable. By putting forward a transcendental realm, imperfections in the sensible world could be fully acknowledged, but nonetheless integrated within a comprehensive dynamic system that preserved the absolute goodness of the divinity.[95]

(Neo-)Platonism integrated more adequately the existence of the individual's free will in its system than Stoicism, which had grave difficulties securing one's own autonomous decisions, because of its thorough materialistic determinism. It did not need to resort, like Epicureanism, to an inexplicable, irrational principle (the little swerve of the atoms) to guarantee the existence of free will.[96] The attraction of a transcendental realm instead of a materialistic world was also noticeable in the visible art of the late third and early fourth centuries, during which the centre of attention shifted from body to soul, from natural form to abstract symbol.[97]

## 2. INDIVIDUAL HAPPY LIFE THROUGH INWARD-TURNING CONTEMPLATION

Because the physical world one lived in was now understood to be inevitably imperfect, attaining true happiness whilst being absorbed in this world became impossible. However,

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[92] E.R. Dodds cleverly states: 'Plotinus apparently did not know that he was a Neoplatonist; he thinks of himself as a Platonist tout court'; E.R. Dodds, 'Tradition and Personal Achievement in the Philosophy of Plotinus', *Journal of Roman Studies* 50 (1960), 1-7 (p. 1). As earlier indicated, this is the reason why I consistently write (Neo-)Platonism, namely to stress each time that actually what we call Neoplatonism was perceived to be in Late Antiquity Platonism.

[93] E.R. Dodds, 1960, p. 1. (Neo-)Platonism is regarded by C.N. Cochrane (1944, p. 172) as 'the final effort of classical reason to attain a correct picture of the universe and of man's place in it'.

[94] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* VI.9 (5): *'Those to whom existence comes about by chance and automatic action and is held together by material forces have drifted far from God'*. He is referring here to the Epicureans and the Stoics.

[95] 'Although the world is the best that could be produced with sensible matter as its basis, it is still for a Platonist decidedly inferior to its Intelligible archetype' (R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 82, referring to PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II.9.8).

[96] On the problematic of free will in Stoicism, see, for instance, B. Berofsky, art. 'Free Will and Determinism', in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* 2 (New York: Scribner, 1973), pp. 236-242, (p. 237).

[97] S. Williams 1985, p. 159; P. Brown 1971, p. 74: 'Their (=artists) emphasis is on the eyes. The eyes flash out at us, revealing an inner life hidden in a charged cloud of flesh.'

Plotinus - agreeing in this with the Stoics - thought one could still reach perfect happiness in this life.[98]

There existed in Plotinus' map of reality two important impulses.[99] The "Outgoing" (*πρόοδος*) or "cosmic overflow" was the downward impulse, whereby a formless, infinite stream of life spontaneously flowed forth from the One. If one would consider only this component of the system, then Plotinus' universe would be subjected to a similar rigid determinism as Stoicism, be it a mentalist, not a materialist one. The "Outgoing" is however balanced by a "Return" (*ἐπιστροφή*),[100] which is a deliberate reversal of the spontaneous "Outgoing" of Reality from the One. The only model for explaining this second impulse is to be found in man, who is more than 'the helpless product of a cosmic overflow'. He is 'a creature possessed of will, and able to attain his true self by a voluntary self-identification with his true source', and accordingly able to realize a "Return". Man's transcendental goal is therefore a mystical union with the One, his source, through his own intellectual effort. The dynamic process is an inward-turning contemplation, wherein self-examination is needed to purify the soul, so that her inner identity can be realized with the whole Intelligible World.[101]

An important feature in Plotinus' system is that it is personally experienced rather than argued for. The individual mystical union with the One is beyond words, impossible to communicate to someone else. One has to come into contact with the innermost being of oneself to realize what it is.[102]

### 3. Two Parts of the Soul

Plotinus strongly believed that the individual soul had a higher, rational part (discursive reason) that remained un-fallen, and thus never descended into the sensible world: only the lower, irrational part of the soul interconnected with the body, and, affected by matter, became imperfect.[103] R.T. Wallis writes: 'For Plotinus our true self is eternally saved and all that is required is to wake up to this fact, a process requiring self-discipline, but perfectly

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[98] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 83; A.H. Armstrong, 'Plotinus', in A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, rev. edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 195-268 (p. 230).

[99] This paragraph is closely based on E.R. Dodds 1960, 1-7 (p. 3).

[100] See also R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 66.

[101] See R.T. Wallis 1972, pp. 82-90.

[102] M. Grant, *The Climax of Rome: The Final Achievements of the Ancient World AD 161-337* (History of Civilization) (London: Weidenfeld, 1968), p. 145: 'we can only know the spiritual universe by finding it in ourselves'; see also R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 88.

[103] R.T. Wallis 1972, pp. 50 & 76; see also S. MacKenna (trans.), J. Dillon (intr. and notes) *Plotinus: The Enneads* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. xcvii.

within the soul's own power'.[104] Plotinian (Neo-)Platonism therefore purports to be a "rational gospel of self-reliance", in theory possible for everyone, in practice only within reach by an intellectual elite.[105]

The higher level of the soul is not subjected to (Stoic or astral) *fatum*, because the latter governs only the sensible world. Here lies the attraction of (Neo-)Platonic thought in an age craving for redemption, wherein the individual tried to escape from the paralysing power of *fatum*: in Plotinus' system, only the lower soul is exposed to *fatum*, while our true self belongs to the Intelligible order. This does not mean that in the sensible realm there is disorder:

> *The Reason-Principle covers all the action and experience of this: nothing happens, even here, by any form of hazard; all follows a necessary order.*[106]

If one lives by the higher soul one can therefore also escape astral determinism.[107] Even though the stars are able to indicate the actions of the higher soul, the latter remains an independent principle. The causal agency of the stars extends only to man's body and his lower soul. Those who live by these inferior principles '*live fate-bound, no longer profiting, merely, by the significance of the sidereal system but becoming as it were a part sunken in it and dragged along with the whole thus adopted*'.[108] Plotinus believed in astrology, which could be explained by the Stoic doctrine of cosmic sympathy, but he limited its causal range.

The human soul's primary aim should therefore not be to care for the body and her lower nature, thereby forgetting the Intelligible world.[109] Plotinus says:

> *Our task is to work for our liberation from this sphere, severing ourselves from all that has gathered about us [...] There is another life, emancipated, whose quality is progression towards the higher realm, towards the good and divine.*[110]

### 4. Evil and Deserved Misfortune

For the Stoics there was no real distinction between providence and *fatum* and the inexorable chain of causation. The cosmos rolled on its everlasting way as an interlocking, ineluctable pattern of cause and effect.[111] In contrast, Plotinus distinguishes between

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[104] cf. PLOTINUS, *Enneads* I.6 (9), esp. 22-25.
[105] M. Grant 1968, p. 151.
[106] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II. 3 (16).
[107] See Plotinus' treatise entitled: 'Are the Stars Causes?' (PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II.3).
[108] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II. 3 (9).
[109] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 79, referring to PLOTINUS, *Enneads* IV. 3 17 (18-31).
[110] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II. 3 (9).
[111] Almost literally quoted from H. Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981; repr. 1990), p. 228.

providence, which concerns the higher realm, and *fatum*, which is another name for the unalterable chain of cause and effect in this inferior and determined world:[112]

> *All adds up to a unity, a comprehensive Providence. From the inferior grade downwards is Fate: the upper is Providence alone.*

The un-Stoic discrepancy between providence and *fatum* seems to exempt the divinity more effectively from any responsibility for evil. In holding on to a divine providence, Plotinus, just as the Stoics, is nevertheless confronted with the problem of *theodicy*. Evil is according to Plotinus closely connected with matter, without regarding it as an independently existing principle: matter is to him 'the point at which the outflow of reality from the One fades away into utter darkness'.[113] The evil inherent in matter is therefore not a positive force, but rather a deprivation, a negation, a 'low, last reflection of the soul'.[114] Matter communicates its own deficiency to the bodies based on it and thus becomes the source of all the sensible world's imperfections.[115] Since the lowest level of the Soul comes into direct contact with bodies, the former is also afflicted, which explains the wickedness of individual souls, who only live according to the needs of their body.

All the defects of matter and body, responsible for the evil in the sensible world, are part of the general harmony of the universe. Plotinus' treatise '*On providence*', divided into two parts by Porphyry, is one of the most important ancient discussions on this topic.[116] He follows much the course of the Stoics to defend the existence of a just providence[117], and is therefore no less harsh for people experiencing adversity: there are no "innocent" victims in a world under divine providence. People are, according to Plotinus, in general responsible, in one way or another, for the misfortunes that befall them, even perhaps through sins committed in a previous existence:

> *And we must not despise the familiar observation that there is something more to be considered than the present. [...] It is not an accident that makes a man a slave; no one is prisoner by chance; every bodily outrage has its due cause. The man once did what he now suffers. A man that murders his mother, will become a woman and be murdered by a son [...] hence arises that awesome word Adrasteia (the*

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[112] H. Chadwick 1990, p. 242; see also H.R. Patch, 'Fate in Boethius and the Neoplatonists', *Speculum* 4 (1929), 62-72.

[113] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 50, referring to PLOTINUS, *Enneads* I. 8 (7).

[114] M. Grant 1968, pp. 144-145. Plotinus is, however, not always consistent about this, and sometimes leans towards the dualism of the Gnostics.

[115] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 50.

[116] S. MacKenna & J. Dillon 1991, p. 135.

[117] V. Cioffari, *Fortune and Fate from Democritus to St. Thomas Aquinas*, diss. (New York: Faculty of Philosophy Columbia University, 1935), p. 51: 'The Stoic attitude is determined by the necessity of somehow accounting for the evidence of bad luck in a providentially ruled world. They thus show that bad Fortune is not an evil at all, but a good, educating, fortifying, and "training" power. This view will reappear among the (Neo-)Platonists, who, numbering among the goods not only educative hardships but also corrective and chastising ones, will further harmonize fortune – both good and bad luck – with Providence'.

> *Inevadable Retribution); for in very truth this ordinance is an Adrasteia, Justice itself and a wonderful wisdom.*[118]

Providence is all-embracing,[119] preserving an order in the universe, wherein even accidents '*are not without their service in the co-ordination and completion of the Universal system*'.[120] For Plotinus there is no room for uncaused chance, so that at the beginning of his treatise he rejects the position of the Epicureans: '*To make the existence and coherent structure of the Universe depend on automatic activity and upon chance is against all good sense.*' Like the Stoics, Plotinus pictures the universe as '*one living organism*',[121] wherein '*Divine Reason is the beginning and the end; all that comes into being must be rational and fall at its coming into an ordered scheme reasonable at every point*'.[122]

Plotinus can at times sound insensitive to us: '*Bad men rule by the feebleness of the ruled: and this is just; the triumph of weaklings would not be just*'.[123] This is so because he generally has contempt for the accidents of the sublunar world: what concerns only one's body or one's possessions is ultimately trivial:

> *Since pleasant conditions add nothing to true happiness and the unpleasant do not lessen the evil in the wicked, the conditions matter little: as well complain that a good man happens to be ugly and a bad man handsome.*[124]

This bleak, essentially Stoic, attitude is however in (Neo-)Platonic philosophy alleviated by belief in an immortal rational soul superimposed.[125] By positing a higher unaffected part of the soul, Plotinus can say it is a ridiculous claim of the Stoics and Epicureans that the wise man cannot suffer when he is being cruelly tortured. He actually does suffer, but only on the level of the lower soul and body. His higher soul remains impassive by it, and it is the task of the wise man to remain a member of this higher order.[126]

Another un-Stoic argument of Plotinus about evil is that he considers those who censure the imperfections of the sensible cosmos, to be making the error of demanding the same perfection in an image as in its original.[127] As long as one fixes one's mind on the sensible world, misfortunes form an unavoidable part of the evil in this world. The only true reality is to be found by inward-turning contemplation, not by participation in the outside

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[118] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. 2 (13). Translations of *Enneads* are from S. MacKenna (& J. Dillon) 1991, unless otherwise stated.
[119] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. 2 (6): '*The Providence must reach to all details; its functioning must consist in neglecting no point*'.
[120] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. 2 (5).
[121] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. 2 (7).
[122] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. 2 (15).
[123] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. 2 (8).
[124] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. 2 (6).
[125] S. MacKenna & J. Dillon 1991, p. xcix.
[126] A.H. Armstong 1970, p. 229; referring to PLOTINUS, *Enneads* I. 4 (13).
[127] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 82.

world.[128] All that happens in the sensible world needs therefore to be looked at in its proper perspective by taking into account what really matters:

> *Murders, death in all its guises, the reduction and sacking of cities, all must be to us just such a spectacle as the changing scenes of a play.*[129]

When one escapes from the sensible world through contemplation, and emancipates and purifies the soul, one also rises above one's so-called misfortunes.[130]

This moral teaching means also a depreciation of politics, and an encouragement to withdraw from public life: '*The wise man will attach no importance to the loss of his position or even to the ruin of his fatherland*'.[131] The statesman became in Plotinus' eyes a "philosopher manqué",[132] too weak to contemplate, finding in action only a shadow of contemplation. *Πρᾶξις* was now being purely regarded as an inferior substitute of *θεωρία*.[133] Such ideas are far removed from the classical idea that man lived in the (sensible) world in order to master it. In a (Neo-)Platonic world man is in the world because he is obliged to be, whereas his real concerns are with higher things.[134] His destiny is no longer confined, as in Stoicism and Epicureanism, within the sensible cosmos.[135]

On the other hand Plotinus' philosophy left untouched the classical notion of self-reliance and the idea that the exercise of one's *virtus* was needed to obtain the happy life.[136] The great change was that this was not any more the traditional (civic or military) *virtus* exercised in public life, for this stands at the bottom of the hierarchy of virtues.[137] Here, *virtus* means the private, contemplative intellectual and moral effort, characterized by self-discipline, and necessary to lead one's soul to her original state of awareness in a mystical union with the One.

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[128] M. Grant 1968, p. 146.

[129] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. 2 (15). J. Dillon points out that although the image of life as a play was familiar with the Stoics, there is one vital difference here within Plotinus' design: only the outer, lower man is part of the play, tied as he is to matter, but not his higher soul. See S. MacKenna & J. Dillon 1991, p. 150, n. 16.

[130] M. Grant 1968, pp. 145 & 141; the (Neo-)Platonic reasoning is thus roughly superimposed upon the borrowed argumentation of the Stoics in their defence of providential order. This two-layered argumentation is more clearly presented in Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae*. In this work, which comprises four books devoted meanly on the problems of providence, free will and evil, is a shift noticeable at the beginning of the third book. From then on the argumentation 'begins to move outside the Stoic conventions into the sketching of a Platonic metaphysic' (H. Chadwick 1981, p. 232).

[131] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* I. 4 (7), quoted by M. Grant 1968, pp. 151-152.

[132] P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 88: 'Even the statesman, imposing order on his city, is for Plotinus yet another such philosopher manqué: for he also seeks in the changeable world outside himself a satisfaction, which only his inner world can provide'.

[133] E.R. Dodds 1960, p. 5.

[134] This is an almost literal quotation from M. Grant 1968, p. 146.

[135] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 11.

[136] J.M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 136-7: 'When man is produced in the Plotinian world, he is a being capable, produced capable, of returning to his origins, of attaining *ὁμοίωσις θεῷ*. He can attain it because part of his soul has not fallen, has not been swamped by the passions, but remains above in the Intelligible World'.

[137] See PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II. 1, entitled: 'The virtues'.

# 4.3. The Ancient Nobility's Response to the Reorganized State

## 4.3.1. A Travesty of the Traditional Pursuit for Worldly Glory through *Virtus*

The ancient senatorial nobility reacted in different ways to the turbulences of the third century AD and the reorganized state of Constantine, which formally turned them into a service aristocracy. In the reorganized state the few openings that seemed to have been left in public life to win immortality depended on the goodwill of the emperor. His consent was needed, for instance, to have one's statue erected,[138] or to obtain the ordinary consulate, by which one's name was given to the new calendar year. This very limited access to worldly immortality, so deeply rooted within Roman ideology, nevertheless retained its appeal throughout Late Antiquity.

There has always existed rivalry among the noble families to win public glory, and now this seemed to have focused even more on a remaining outlet, by throwing the most expensive, magnificent games at Rome.[139] Although Rome had lost in power, the senators regained a level of influence in their city that they had lost since republican times: 'it was they, not the emperor, who now provided for the city'.[140] The vast "waste" of riches on games even needed to be tempered from time to time by imperial decree.[141] Still, a huge amount of money must have been lavished on public entertainment in Rome for personal prestige.

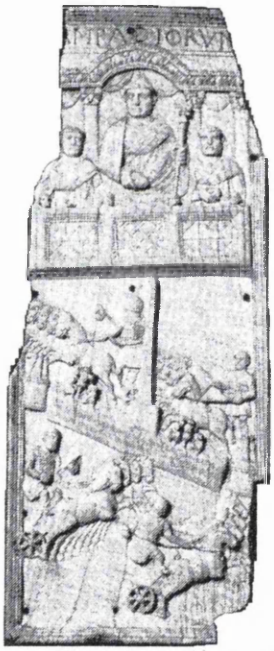

*Figure 4*: The Lampadius family presiding over the circus races they have provided, *Ivory diptych*, *c.* AD 425.

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[138] As befell Marius Victorinus, and Symmachus asked this from the emperor for the pagan nobleman Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (J. Matthews 1975, p. 210). See also AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XIV.6: '*Some set their hearts upon statues, believing that in this way their fame will be secured for ever, as if there were more satisfaction to be gained from senseless bronze figures than from the consciousness of a well-spent life.*' The translations from Ammianus Marcellinus' text in this thesis are taken from W. Hamilton (trans.) and A. Wallace-Hadrill (introd. and notes), *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Later Roman Empire (AD 354-378)* (London: Penguin Books, 1986).

[139] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 706: 'The games given by senators were more numerous and more splendid at Rome, where they were an old tradition and the ancient senatorial families took pride in spending fabulous sums upon them'; See also A.H.M. Jones 1966, pp. 275-276.

[140] P. Brown 1971, p. 37.

[141] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, pp. 537-538: 'The ostentation of the old families set a high standard of expenditure at Rome.'

Apart from the immensely popular horse races, gladiatorial shows were indispensable for these games. The public slaughter during these shows touched a fundamental nerve among Romans. It was a kind of 'social, if not religious, ritual'.[142] Its intellectual justification was that they '*inspired a glory in wounds and a contempt of death, since the love of praise and desire for victory could be seen, even in the bodies of slaves and criminals*'.[143] These games can therefore also be understood to represent a vital element within Roman ideology, which was further and further remote from the senators and the civic office holders of Rome. It embodied the basic idea of *virtus* among the Romans, namely glory in battle, courage, and risking one's life, all aspects in which the glorious past of the Romans was steeped. One only needs to be reminded of Virgil's focus on bloodshed and heroic exploits in the second half of the *Aeneid* to realize how deep-seated this preoccupation with warfare actually was among the Romans. Another area of fierce competition between noble families was the appropriation of (landed) wealth, which was in principle a private matter, but of course enhanced public esteem.[144]

If we consider what was left of the republican ideal for the ancient nobility, then we can conclude that this was only a shadow of what it used to be. The Senate always retained a memory of its ancient authority and a certain tradition of independence,[145] but it was stripped of most, if not all, of its political power. The city of Rome had lost its status as governing centre of the empire, the ancient republican magistracies such as quaestor, praetor, and (suffect or ordinary) consul, which formed part of the traditional *cursus honorum* of the nobility, were reduced to empty ceremonial forms, of which the most important duty was to deliver public games and entertainments at Rome.[146] The noblemen were being kept out of the important military posts, so that they could not pursue any martial *virtus* even if they wanted to. The civic *virtus* could now only be exercised in the less dignified way of imperial service. In the past, the elite of society felt it their first duty to serve their *respublica* through public posts, and they were being urged to exercise their *virtus* by a desire to win worldly glory. Now, the civil posts came to be regarded by the ancient nobility as a burden in service of an alienated imperial machine, which they were obliged to take up in order to remain officially a distinguished member of society.

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142 C. Wells, *The Roman Empire*, 2nd edn (London: Fontana Press, 1992), p. 249.
143 C. Wells 1992, p. 250, quoting PLINY, *Panegyric* 33.
144 AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XIV.6: '*Others again, with an appearance of deep gravity, hold forth unasked on the immense extent of their family property, multiplying in imagination the annual produce of their fertile lands, which extend, they boastfully declare, from farthest east to farthest west.*' On the enormous wealth accumulated by some ancient Roman families, see A. Cameron 1993, p. 117; P. Brown 1971, p. 195.
145 On this see also the next section.
146 A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 532; J. Matthews 1975, p. 13.

### 4.3.2. The Traditional Ideal Upheld through Education

Despite the gradual de-politicisation of the Senate and of the Roman nobility in general, the traditional republican ideal was being passed on via the education system. The exceptional uniformity of Roman culture was mainly due to the fact that the upper and middle classes all received the same type of learning, which was entirely based on the classical literature.[147] In the Latin West the highly venerated authors Virgil, Cicero, Sallust and Terence, still provided the standard texts of education. Although much attention went to form and style, it was inevitable that also the content of these texts was being passed on. The mental legacy of the *respublica* was being sustained in Roman education, which groomed generation after generation of young men in conservative ways.[148] The infiltration of new members into the senatorial order happened gradually. They mostly came from a class, which had been educated in the old tradition, since such qualification was required for their administrative duties.[149] A.H.M. Jones says it succinctly: 'To mix in polite society, and to make his way in the world, whatever profession he adopted, a man had to know his pagan authors'.[150] These new men quickly absorbed the traditions of the Senate house, and often became more zealous champions of its privileges than the surviving aristocrats.[151] In the Late Antique world a self-conscious effort was being made by this new, expanded aristocracy to 'regain its roots in the past and to achieve a firm basis of cohesion'.[152] A high cultural standard, obtained through absorption of the classical literature, became a new way to assert the identity of this new elite, and to mark itself off from other classes, now that this no longer could be done through traditional participation in public life.[153] Because of this, the division between the cultivated civil senators and the barbarian militia became even more noticeable.[154] According to the senatorial order, one of the important requirements of a good (soldier) emperor was, that he, too, should be a cultured man.[155]

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147 Literature had become the very essence of the culture of late antiquity: 'The man of letters, trained in the classical dialectics [...] was the only type of educated humanity known', A. Alföldi (1952, p. 107) states.
148 Almost literally taken from P. Brown 1971, p. 29.
149 G. Alföldi 1988, p. 199.
150 A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 1006.
151 A.H.M. Jones, 1966, p. 15.
152 P. Brown 1971, p. 30.
153 P. Brown 1971, p. 32.
154 Separation of civilian and military authority reached its completion under Constantine (S. Williams 1985, p. 206). The military commanders of humble origins had the most difficulties in assimilating to the cultural standards of the aristocracy (G. Alföldi 1988, p. 198).
155 A. Alföldi 1952, p. 104: 'Education, elegance, and amiability are qualities absolutely necessary for emperors'.

With literary education in demand and the greater emphasis on high cultural standards in the governing classes, great opportunities opened up for ambitious academics in Roman society, which is demonstrated by the career of the poet Ausonius (AD *c.* 310 – *c.* 395) and the worldly aspirations of Augustine (AD 354 - 430).[156]

## 4.3.3. The Appeal of *Otium*

### 1. INDOLENT *OTIUM*

Being detached in more than one way from the real centre of power, many noblemen turned their back on public life, and preferred to live a luxurious life of leisure on one of their immense estates. Ammianus Marcellinus' famous criticism of the idleness of some senators at Rome, who revelled in their luxurious life,[157] should not be extrapolated to the Roman nobility as a whole. Nevertheless, the sumptuous inactivity of this minority, 'levitas paucorum'[158], stood in stark contrast with the behaviour of their revered ancestors:

> *They presumably do not know that their ancestors, who were responsible for the expansion of Rome, did not owe their distinction to riches, but overcame all obstacles by their valour in fierce wars, in which, as far as wealth or style of living or dress was concerned, they were indistinguishable from common soldiers.*[159]

Due to the new imperial system installed by Constantine, the ancient nobility began to show ambiguous feelings towards the holding of public posts, which could be summarised as 'distaste for the intrusive obligations and trouble of political life, combined with a respect for the dignity and prestige of office, and a genuine sense of responsibility in exercising it'.[160] The prominent Roman senator Symmachus (AD 345-405)[161], for instance, reveals great joy when one of his correspondents has obtained a civic post, while at the same time he is congratulating his son-in-law for receiving release from the burden of his public duties.[162]

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156 P. Brown 1971, p. 30; on Ausonius see J. Matthews 1975, chpt. 3: 'The Ascendancy of Ausonius' (pp. 56-87); On Augustine, see the second main part of present thesis.

157 AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XIV 6.1 f.; XXVIII 4.1 f. See also P. Brown 1971, p. 115, quoting from *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium*, 55: *'There is at Rome a Senate of wealthy men ... Every one of them is fit to hold high office. But they prefer not to. They stand aloof, preferring to enjoy their property at leisure.'* For reference, see J. Matthews 1975, p. 9. About Ammianus Marcellinus' wrongly supposed ties with the circle of Symmachus, see A. Cameron, *'The Roman Friends of Ammianus'*, in *Journal of Roman Studies* 54 (1964), 15-28 (especially p. 16): 'Although Ammianus often speaks of the Senate, as a body with respect, it is fairly clear, to judge from his attacks on individual senators, [...] and his two famous diatribes against the Roman nobility (XIV.6; XXVIII.4), that he did not subscribe unreservedly to the confident opinion of Symmachus that the Senate was 'pars melior humani generis' (*Ep.* 1.52)'.

158 AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XIV.6, 7.

159 AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XIV.6.

160 J. Matthews 1975, p. 12.

161 He is the man of the famous *relatio* on the restoration of the Altar of the goddess *Victoria* in AD 384. See section 3.1.1.2.

162 J. Matthews 1975, p. 10.

Many dignified senators only wanted to do the minimum required for their position, preferring to lead a life *in otio* (maybe better translated "in private" than "in leisure"), if possible on one of their great *latifundia*.[163] In Symmachus' writings a certain detachment can be detected towards the holding of public office,[164] and he only occupied three public posts during his public career of more than forty years.[165] The remainder he enjoyed *in otio*, although the management of his estates, which were widespread over Italy, Sicily and North Africa,[166] kept him busy in his private life. For distinguished men like Symmachus, 'the burden of responsibility entailed by the possession of public office were an unwelcome intrusion upon a senator's leisure'.[167]

*Otium* was considered to be the birthright of a senator.[168] This tradition came again into vogue in the late fourth century.[169] The activity during one's leisure varied considerably. Some indeed must have led an indolent life, enjoying their wealth on their estates, or in Rome. Others, however, found a more dignified pastime: they practised an *otium liberale*, the pursuit of learned leisure.

## 2. *Otium liberale* or 'cultured retirement' and (Neo-)Platonism

This more noble kind of *otium* can be understood as an alternative way for a Roman senator to serve his *respublica* by preserving and advancing its mental legacy. The growing barbarisation of the empire was an extra impetus to uphold this cherished traditional ideal in the minds of the Romans. Some retired senators spent their time re-editing manuscripts of the classical texts, or writing commentaries on them. In so doing they tried to make them still relevant to a contemporary senator. In treasuring the texts of Virgil and Cicero, they kept alive a tradition from which they themselves derived their prestige in society, even

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[163] See the section on *otium senatoris* in A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, pp. 557-562 & the section on "*otium*" and "office" in J. Matthews 1975, pp. 1-31, and for the meaning of *otium*, see p. 17: 'The distinction [...] between "business" and "leisure", *negotium* and *otium*, reflects the simple difference between being in office and being out of it. But within the wider context of the actual social behaviour of senators, the distinction does not represent in more than a formal and artificial manner the division between the "public" and "private" life of a senator'. See also W.A. Laidlaw, 'Otium', *Greece and Rome N.S.* 15 (1968), 42-52. The fact that *otium* 'leisure' is semantically prior to *negotium* 'business' may be connected with the time-honoured idea that senators had the birthright of *otium*, so that it became a distinctive feature of this group.

[164] J. Matthews 1975, p. 9.

[165] J.F. Matthews, 'The Letters of Symmachus', in *Latin Literature of the Fourth Century*, ed. by J.W. Binns (London Aand Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 58-99 (p. 75). The posts were governorship of Lucania and Bruttium, the proconsulship of Africa and the prefecture of Rome. In AD 391, Symmachus would also receive the consulship from Theodosius I.

[166] G. Alföldi 1988, pp. 195-196.

[167] J. Matthews 1975, p. 9.

[168] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 559.

[169] P. Brown 2000, p. 108.

if this tradition had become more and more an anachronism.[170] The Roman senators had become the real guardians of Roman tradition and of the glorious past of Rome.[171] They were '*proud to represent the oldest and best traditions of Rome and laid claim to particular prestige*'.[172]

(Neo-)Platonism endorsed the inclination of leading a leisured life, making it more dignified, and theoretically justifiable. It taught that the 'purificatory' virtues, exercised through moral and intellectual self-discipline, were of higher rank than civic *virtus*.[173] This helped cultivated men to uphold their purpose and pride in life, while refraining from public office. A deliberately chosen leisured life devoted to learning was no longer looked down upon, as had been the case under Stoicism. Seneca posited that active involvement in society was essential to attain the happy life, and that only illness or frailty could excuse someone from his public duty.[174] Plotinus, however, valued contemplation higher than the public life.[175] Within (Neo-)Platonic thinking it became therefore respectable for a healthy man to withdraw from public life and to seek happiness through philosophy *in otio*. This alternative still tied in with the belief that one's own *virtus* could bring the happy life. At a time when the traditional exercise of *virtus* in public life had become less attractive, the private exercise of *virtus* for the purpose of purification and self-exploration offered them an alternative dignified road towards the true happy life.

(Neo-)Platonic theory may well have assisted the nobility's traditionalist mindset also on another level. The existence of a transcendental realm beyond the sensible world could make the nobility's continued devotion to outdated Roman republican ideology, within the new imperial system seem less absurd. A. Alföldi writes that it was an age 'in which abstract theory triumphed over reality'.[176] The disparity between reality (the 'actual authoritarian regime') and the republican ideal could now be regarded as a manifestation of the imperfectness of the sensible world in comparison with the ideal spiritual world. There was therefore less need to adjust one's own traditional ideology because of the changed circumstances. The nobility could still act within the "dominate" as if the traditional

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[170] A genuine effort was thereby being made in this area as shown by Servius' commentary on Virgil and Macrobius' *Saturnalia* and his *Expositio in somnium Scipionis* ('*Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*').
[171] A. Alföldi 1952, p. 111.
[172] Quoted from P. Brown 1971, p. 198.
[173] See Plotinus' treatise on the virtues: *Enneads* I.2. For instance I.2 (3): '*To Plato, unmistakably, there are two distinct orders of virtue, and the civic does not suffice for Likeness [to God]*', and I.2 (7): '*He will live, no longer, the human life of the good man – such as civic virtue commands – but, leaving this beneath him, will take up instead another life, that of the Gods*'; see also A.H. Armstrong 1970, pp. 228-230.
[174] See also the section on Stoic resistance of present work, especially 'Opposition through Abstention'.
[175] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 84.
[176] A. Alföldi 1952, p. 106.

*respublica* was thriving.[177] I do not want to press this idea too hard, by claiming this was a very deliberate recognition from the side of the nobility. I am only suggesting that within a (Neo-)Platonic context, a discrepancy was allowed between the ideal and the actual manifestation of this ideal on the ground, and this fitted well the situation in which the Roman nobility found itself with its traditional ideology.

There was also another reason why these senators could continue upholding their republican spirit, despite the political system having changed to a form wherein republican *libertas* was a dead word and the Senate had practically no political power. The propaganda of the Roman State remained inextricably intertwined with its own past. The principate had risen out of the free *respublica*, and from the very beginning it claimed to be a (modified) continuance of the *respublica. Princeps* Augustus had to take into account the basically conservative reflex of the Romans in his effort to legitimise his powerful position.[178] No matter how far removed the government in reality came to be from the ideology of the *respublica* - with the imperial residence separate from Rome (!), and with the adoption of a new religion - the core of the ancient nobility could still clung to its own perception, expecting that Rome would for ever remain the seat of the world.[179]

The *Expositio in somnium Scipionis* of Macrobius is an interesting example of how traditional republican ideology (as expounded in Cicero's text) and (Neo-)Platonism could be harmonised to provide an interpretation of Cicero's authoritative text, more relevant to the senatorial situation of his time.[180] In following passage, Macrobius has to defend the Ciceronian traditional idea that someone can gain his way to the stars through political engagement. This goes against Plotinus' thesis that only union with the One through intellectual effort can lead to a happy life. Macrobius emphasises therefore Plotinus' acknowledgment of the (relative) value of civic *virtus*, even if this kind of *virtus* is below the *virtus* exercised by the philosopher. He combines (Neo-)Platonic philosophy with the traditional republican ideology of the now almost "divine" authority of Cicero:

> *In an early part of this work [i.e. I.8] we noted that men of leisure possessed some virtues and men of affairs others, that the former virtues befitted philosophers and the latter the leaders in public welfare, and that the exercise of both made one blessed. [...] If a man is looked upon as possessing no learning but is nevertheless prudent, temperate, courageous, and just in public office, though enjoying no leisure he may nevertheless be recognized for his exercise of the virtues of men of action and receive his reward in the sky as well as the others. And if a man, because of a quiet disposition, is unfit for a life of activity*

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177 The fact that many ignored the changes of the empire, with a less prominent role for Rome to play, contributes to the idea that this was not really important. Imperative to them was Rome, and the idea that they, the flower of society, represented the glory of Rome's past. See also W. Steinmann 1990, pp. 7-8.

178 C. Wells 1992, p. 50: 'He [i.e. Augustus] simply wanted to legalize his position and to make his virtual monarchy more palatable by adherence to traditional forms'.

179 P. Brown 1971, pp. 41-42: 'Outside a restricted, if articulate, circle nostalgia for the senate meant little; and outside the Latin world, there was no veneration for the city of Rome.

180 Macrobius wrote this work probably at the beginning of the fifth century AD (A. Cameron 1993, p. 157).

> *but by virtue of rich gifts for introspection is elevated to the realms above and devotes the benefits of his training solely to divine matters, searching for heavenly truths and shunning the material world, he, too, is taken up into the sky in consideration of his virtues of leisure. It often happens, too, that the same individual is distinguished for excellence both in public life and in private reflections, and he also is assured of a place in the sky. [...] Greece, it is true, produced many men whose lives were dedicated solely to the philosopher's retirement, but such men are not found among the Romans.*[181]

For Macrobius there were two different roads to reach a blessed life: either exercising the traditional *virtus* in an active, public life, or else exercising (Neo-)Platonic contemplative *virtus* withdrawn from public life. For the second way of life, he misrepresented the *auctoritas* of Cicero, who would never have thought so highly of the contemplative life in comparison with a political active life. Cicero devoted himself to the study of philosophy when he was prevented from pursuing an active political life.

### 4.3.4. The growing import of theurgy in (Neo-)Platonism

At first sight there seems to exist a great difference between the complex mystical (Neo-)Platonism, and the more practical minded dutiful Roman nobleman. In consequence, Plotinian ideas only really gained footing among the educated Roman nobility, through the filter of his pupil Porphyry (AD *c.* 233- *c.* 305).[182] Since Plotinian (Neo-)Platonism proved to be too subtle and too complex, the more simplified Porphyrian version became the basis of a particular Roman (Neo-)Platonism in the Latin West.[183] At the centre of Porphyry's interests stood the problem of the Descent and Return of the soul, and he set up, as it were, a science of redemption.[184]

Plotinus had insisted that the Return of the Soul to the One could only be achieved through a strenuous effort of philosophical self-inspection, which had an intellectual and moral component.[185] This was considered to be too difficult to achieve in the eyes of later

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[181] MACROBIUS, *Expositio in somnium Scipionis* II.17 4-7; translation by W.H. Stahl (trans., introd. and notes), *Macrobius: Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 244.

[182] For (Neo-)Platonism in Rome, see J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, pp. 234-235. On the interest some Roman senators showed in Plotinus' teaching, see PORPHYRY, *Life of Plotinus* 7: *'There were also among Plotinus' s hearers not a few members of the Senate'*.

[183] 'Nicht Plotin (trotz seiner Lehrtätigkeit in Rom), sondern Porphyrios ist der Vater des Neuplatonismus in lateinisher Sprache' wrote H. Dörrie in 1964; quoted from W. Steinmann, *Die Seelenmetaphysik des Marius Victorinus*, Hamburger Theologische Studien 2 (Hamburg: Steinmann & Steinmann, 1990), p. 93. R.T. Wallis (1972, p. 96) writes: 'Porphyry has been seen as simply a populariser of Plotinus, and it is certainly that his greatest influence lay in this direction, especially in the Latin West, where his simplification of his master's thought appealed to the practically-minded Romans' distrust of the subtleties of theoretical philosophy'.

[184] W. Steinmann 1990, p. 92.

[185] A.H. Armstrong 1970, p. 259.

(Neo-)Platonists, and instead they relied more and more on the religious rites of their time to make the Return of the Soul easier.[186]

Already Porphyry had a higher opinion of magic than Plotinus. For the latter, ritual was largely irrelevant, since it could never affect the higher soul.[187] Porphyry, however, thought theurgy, 'a technique of calling on the gods by magical or occult means in order to provide someone knowledge and control over the physical world',[188] to be an aid for purification of the pneumatic soul. Theurgy became 'an easier first step for those unable to pursue philosophy directly', without it actually being able to bring about a union with the One.[189] For Porphyry theurgy could never be a substitute for philosophical effort. Only later, the (Neo-)Platonist Iamblichus († AD *c.* 326) would claim that theurgy was essential to reach true blessedness, and he even dismissed the Plotinian road of intellectual effort.[190] What according to Plotinus was obviously only granted to an elite of intellectuals, became for Iamblichus universally possible via theurgy. Through embracing popular religion (Neo-)Platonism became influential in a wider circle of the Roman cultured elite. Porphyry's revision and systematisation of Plotinus' teaching met the needs of the Romans at that time, by taking into consideration their great regard for tradition, and by providing them with a religious philosophy, which could satisfy mind and heart.[191]

The escalating interest in theurgy went together with a shift in the (Neo-)Platonic system. Plotinus had defended the idea that the union of the Soul with the One was an upward movement, an *ἄνοδος*. The union is thus not achieved by the approach of the higher to the lower: it is no act of grace.[192] By stressing the need for magic also the issue of divine grace was being raised. People seemed to have been in need of divine assistance, a coming down of the divinity in order to help them achieve union with the One. Almost all later (Neo-)Platonists rejected Plotinus' doctrine of an un-fallen part of the soul.[193] When even the higher part of the soul does not escape the disastrous consequences of incarnation into the body, the human soul becomes fundamentally separated from the divine.[194] Iamblichus

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[186] C. Zintzen, 'Die Wertung von Mystik und Magie', in *Die Philosophie des Neuplatonismus* (Wege der Forschung 436) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgeselschaft, 1977), pp. 391-426 (p. 408), (transliterated from *Rheinishes Museum* 108 (1965), 71-100).
[187] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 71.
[188] A. Cameron 1993, p. 165.
[189] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 108; W. Steinmann 1990, p. 107, referring to Porphyry's work *De regressu animae.*
[190] IAMBLICHUS, *De Mysteriis*, II. 11, referred to by J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 234, n. 6, and R.T. Wallis 1972, pp. 120-121. See also A.C. Lloyd, 'The Later Neoplatonists', in A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, rev. edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 269-325 (p. 279 & p. 295).
[191] W. Steinmann 1990, p. 93.
[192] This is almost a literal translation from C. Zintzen 1965, p. 407.
[193] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 120.
[194] C. Zintzen 1965, p. 420.

stressed the need for divine grace in his *De Mysteriis*, and so did the (Neo-)Platonist Proclus (AD 412-485). For them the use of theurgy became the only way of salvation, to achieve release from the bonds of fate, and even mystical union with the One.[195]

### 4.3.5. (Neo-)Platonism, Paganism and Christianity

The more religious form of (Neo-)Platonism with a superstitious tinge as expounded by Iamblichus, provided the nobility with a means to invigorate their own ancient religion, by making it form an essential part of an all-embracing Hellenistic philosophical system. Their ancient rituals could now assist them in purifying their souls, and in accomplishing union with the gods. Their great reverence for traditional ritual received thus theoretical backing from the important place of theurgy in later (Neo-)Platonism. This movement became self-consciously pagan and hostile to Christianity.[196] At the same time, Christians (and particularly Augustine) drew on Porphyrian (Neo-)Platonism to develop an intellectual defence and underpinning of their own doctrine. In the Latin West, Christian intellectuals ended up being 'the almost unchallenged heirs of Plotinus',[197] partly because the religious philosophy of the pagan (Neo-)Platonists proved in the end too intellectual to satisfy the general public.

#### 1. THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN TENDENCY OF (NEO-)PLATONISM

Already Plotinus had written against the Gnostics, with some of his criticism also applicable to certain groups of Christians,[198] and Porphyry wrote a learned, full-blown attack against Christianity.[199] One of the differences between Plotinian (Neo-)Platonism and Christianity relevant to the present study, was that the former expounded the natural superiority of a small elite in society which could reach the happy life through its own intellectual and moral effort. (Neo-)Platonism was, as mentioned before, basically a rationally based gospel of self-reliance, with a strong belief in self-dependence. Further, the One in (Neo-)Platonic thought had no need of its products and would not care if it had no products at all.[200] The union with the One was in Plotinus' system a natural event, and did not depend on supernatural grace: there is no such thing as a "drama of redemption".[201] However, one needs to be aware that Plotinus sometimes seems to suggest in his language

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[195] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 3 & p. 153; On Proclus see C. Zintzen 1965, pp. 420-421.
[196] J.G.H.W. Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 234.
[197] P. Brown 1971, p. 77.
[198] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II.9: 'Against the Gnostics'.
[199] P. Brown 1971, p. 73. His treatise was publicly destroyed in AD 448.
[200] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 64.
[201] Almost literally quoted from E.R. Dodds 1960, p. 6.

that a 'kind of superadded grace is required for the attainment of the union'.[202] A.H. Armstrong points out that

> the final contact or vision [ ...] is not something which we can attain when we choose by our own effort. We have to wait for the One to "appear", to make us aware of his eternal presence to our souls.[203]

The difference from Christian grace still seems to be that Plotinus thinks that union with the One is a natural, almost automatic event, even if not fully in our own control in the final stage. The great need for redemption and divine grace, apparent in the success of eastern mystery religions and Christianity, would soon leave its imprint on the development of (Neo-)Platonism itself, as also the previous section has shown.

### 2. JULIAN 'THE APOSTATE': "CONVERSION" FROM CHRISTIAN TO CLASSICAL IDEOLOGY

The more intellectual paganism that was rooted in later (Neo-)Platonism found a fervent advocate in Julian 'the Apostate' (sole emperor AD 361-363). Under the spiritual direction of the extreme Maximus of Ephesus,[204] he tried to construct a Hellenic religious system based on Iamblichan (Neo-)Platonism in order to counter the growing appeal of Christianity,. To this purpose he even copied some successful elements of the Christian Church, impressed as he was by their efficient organisation and their policy of charity.[205] In short, he tried to re-establish the ancient religion in the form of a church with Iamblichean (Neo-)Platonism as its theological creed.[206] Whether his attempt to revive pagan religion could have succeeded remains doubtful. If Julian could have returned as a victor from his daring Persian campaign, and ruled for much longer so that the changes he implemented would have had time to have their effect, the magnitude of the impact should not be underestimated.[207] Perhaps his greatest handicap existed in the fact that he was almost obliged to graft his religious system at least in part on the ancient religion, and not solely on one of the thriving eastern mystery religions, because of his belief in the traditional Hellenistic ideology.[208] He highly valued the study of the classics, and this almost automatically led him to the ancient

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[202] This is a quotation from J.M. Rist, 'Mysticism and Transcendence in later Neoplatonism', *Hermes* 92 (1964), 213-225 (p. 215).
[203] A.H. Armstrong 1970, p. 261.
[204] In AD 371 he was one of the victims of a series of treason trials, and was beheaded on the charge of divination (AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXIX.1).
[205] A.H.M. Jones 1964, I, p. 121; P. Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (n.p.: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976; n.p.: Pelican Books, 1980), p. 98.
[206] R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 96; A. Cameron 1993, p. 95.
[207] According to A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 62.
[208] Julian's attempt to restore classical ideology in general is well brought out by C.N. Cochrane 1944, pp. 261-291.

gods, even if their temples had by now been neglected in favour of foreign mystery religions.

Julian took some very astute measures against Christianity. For instance, he did not persecute them, but instead pleaded for religious tolerance, also for the Christian heresies.[209] Another shrewd, but very logical move of Julian's was his famous edict of AD 362 which excluded Christians from practising as teachers of literature or rhetoric.[210] This decree soon drove a wedge into the comfortable *modus vivendi* the two ideologies by then had been able to achieve.[211] The tensions became the most outspoken in the eighties and nineties of the fourth century AD. It confronted the Christian intellectuals with the difficult matter what attitude they should adopt towards classical culture. Julian had claimed that since classical literature was inextricably intertwined with traditional religion,[212] Christians could not honestly expound the stories of the pagan gods in Homer and Virgil.[213] A traditional education was, however, even more than before 'the passport to professional and official advancement and to cultivated society'.[214] The fact that Christians returned to the genuine pagan classics as soon as Julian was dead, and that the syllabus remained unchanged throughout the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries AD,[215] is an indication that learned Christians, too, felt that the classical culture as a whole, even if they condemned the pagan aspects of it, was part of their cultural heritage.

With the Christianisation of the nobility at the end of the fourth and in the fifth century AD, the ideological crisis within the senatorial class was for the most part solved. R.A. Markus writes: 'The culture which men of Symmachus' circle and generation regarded as the distinctive property of a pagan elite in an increasingly christianised world became the treasured possession of a Christian elite in an increasingly barbarian world'.[216] P. Brown brings out well that in the end the Christian Church made a far greater contribution towards

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[209] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXII.5; C.N. Cochrane 1944, p. 271.
[210] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXII.10; A.H.M. Jones 1964, I, pp. 121-122.
[211] R.A. Markus, 'Paganism, Christianity and the Latin Classics in the Fourth Century', in *Latin Literature of the Fourth Century*, ed. by J.W. Bins (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan, 1974), pp. 1-21 (p. 4); A. Cameron 1993, p. 163. The problem of education would later also vex Augustine, who formulated his answer in *De doctrina Christiana.*
[212] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 1007: 'To an educated man all the glories of his classical heritage were intimately connected with the pagan gods and myths'.
[213] C.N. Cochrane 1944, pp. 286-289, quoting Julian's lengthy justification of his ruling (JULIAN 422-424), for instance: '*I do insist that they [i.e. Christian teachers] ought to refrain from teaching what they do not believe to be true*'.
[214] A.H.M. Jones 1966, p. 61.
[215] A.H.M. Jones 1964, II, p. 1007.
[216] R.A. Markus 1974, p. 15.

the preservation and spreading of the classical culture than any elite of pagan philosophers could have done.[217]

### 3. Marius Victorinus: conversion from Classical to Christian Ideology

One of the victims of Julian's decree on teaching was the rhetorician Marius Victorinus (AD *c.* 281/291- after 363), who, in his seventies had converted to Christianity.[218] His life story played an important role in the conversion of Augustine,[219] and it illustrates how (Neo-)Platonism could make an educated *vir clarissimus* exchange the traditional Roman ideology of *mos maiorum* for the new ideology of Christianity. The intellectual journey of the Roman rhetorician - from scepticism, via (Neo-)Platonism to Christianity - anticipated to some extent that of Augustine. Victorinus was granted a statue on the Trajan forum at Rome for his achievements.[220] He embodied in his age the ideal of high culture, writing profusely on grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy.[221] He further translated 'quosdam libros platonicorum' ('*certain books of the (Neo-)Platonists*'), which Augustine had read before his conversion.[222] His translations made (Neo-)Platonic thought more widely available in the Latin West, above all the Porphyrian interpretation of it, which highlighted the role of the soul.[223] During his teaching Victorinus must have been in contact with an intellectual milieu where (Neo-)Platonism was expounded, which was not necessarily anti-Christian.[224]

When studying Porphyrian philosophy Victorinus came across a problem that threatened the credibility of the whole system, namely the aporia between worldly corruption and self-knowledge, in particular the knowledge of God.[225] Already Plotinus had shown an ambivalent attitude towards matter,[226] and this became even more explicit in

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217 P. Brown 1971, p. 93: 'The Christian bishops were the missionaries of the culture with which they had identified themselves'.
218 H. Chadwick (trans., introd. & notes), *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 134, n. 3.
219 AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* VIII.ii (3) - vi (11).
220 W. Steinmann, *Die Seelenmetaphysik des Marius Victorinus* (Hamburg: Steinmann & Steinmann, 1990), p. 7.
221 H. Chadwick 1991, p. 134 n. 3.
222 We only know of these translations from AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* VIII. ii (3); see J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 14. Most likely one of these books was Porphyry's *Isagoge* (see R.A. Markus, 'Marius Victorinus and Augustine', in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. by A.H. Armstrong (London: Cambridge University Press, pp. 331-419 (p. 331)).
223 J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 14.
224 W. Steinmann 1990, p. 15.
225 I am following in this section W. Steinmann (1990), especially p. 107 & p. 123, as will become clear from the footnotes.
226 R.T. Wallis 1972, p. 49: 'The Middle Platonists had disputed whether Matter was an inert, formless and hence ethically neutral entity or an active principle of evil. Plotinus characteristically offers a paradoxical

Porphyry's interpretation and systematisation of Plotinus' thoughts. Porphyry's view led essentially to an unbridgeable disparity between matter and soul/*νοῦς*, between immanence and transcendence, even though Porphyry himself would have vehemently denied this.[227] He must have been torn between the almost mechanical process of Plotinus' method, capable of leading to the highest ascent, and his own crestfallen experience, that this ascent was always threatened to fail because of ties to worldly existence, body and matter.[228] Although Porphyry was tempted to see in theurgy the required external merciful mediation to overcome the discrepancy between immanence and transcendence, he could never persuade himself to include these magical rites, attractive as they were to him, into the rational thought of his teacher Plotinus. As mentioned before, theurgy could play for Porphyry at the most a purifying role for the pneumatic part of the soul, but he made it clear that the Return to the One could not be realized through such rites.[229] Iamblichus, and later also Proclus would take this final step of systematically integrating the working of theurgy within orthodox (Neo-)Platonism, claiming that theurgy could lead the soul to union with the gods.[230]

Choosing the power of theurgy and the guidance of Chaldean oracles was not the road Victorinus wished to take in order to solve the Porphyrian problem. In the end, the Pauline epistles, which during the fourth century AD received renewed attention, provided him with the key to his solution, namely Paul's *πίστις*-concept (*faith*).[231] The central message of the Christian Pauline theology, namely the merciful acting of God in Christ, was now understood to provide a kind of bridging function between divine transcendence and spiritual immanence.[232] In his writings Victorinus would therefore present the Christian faith as a kind of Platonism for the masses.[233] The avid yearning for redemption led many (Neo-)Platonists of that age to the road of Christianity. Marius Victorinus stood as a weighty proponent of this group; soon Augustine would follow.

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combination of both views'. See also M. Grant (1968, p. 144): 'At times Plotinus appears to be a dualist like his contemporary Mani, asserting that matter is darkness and the principle of evil'.

227 W. Steinmann 1990, p. 107.

228 W. Steinmann 1990, p. 107.

229 W. Steinmann 1990, p. 107.

230 Notice that Julian 'the Apostate' thought the Sun-god to have been the 'intermediary between the One and the material world' (M. Grant 1968, p. 181).

231 W. Steinmann 1990, p. 123.

232 W. Steinmann 1990, p. 123.

233 H. Chadwick 1991, p. 134, n. 3. In addition, he used to a great extend (Neo-)Platonic philosophical concepts in his trinitarian theological works (R.A. Markus 1970, p. 332).

# PART II

## AUGUSTINE'S CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE TO *FORTUNA*'S POWER

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCING AUGUSTINE:

## *THE STORMY SECULAR CAREER OF "AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS"*

Augustine's turbulent spiritual journey towards his conversion to Christianity is well known from his literary masterpiece *Confessiones* (written between *c.* AD 397 - 399). In the first nine books of this work, Augustine, now Catholic bishop of Hippo, repentantly looks back upon his sinful past. A proper introduction devoted to his life before his conversion seems therefore uncalled for. This study could nevertheless benefit from a rather different, more secular approach of Augustine's youthful years, one which focuses on his public life.

Augustine's efforts to obtain *Fortuna*'s gifts before his conversion - 'Inhiabam honoribus, lucris, coniugio' (*'I aspired to honours, money and marriage'*)[1] - are for obvious reasons of major interest to this study. According to C. Lepelley, Augustine's *spes saeculi* ("worldly hope") played a central role in his youth; he observed that in accounts of his life, this aspect is usually overshadowed by the story of his spiritual progress.[2] To tell Augustine's life story with his worldly ambition at its heart, will render a complementary picture of the Augustine arising from the pages of *Confessiones.* It reveals how much he, at least outwardly, conformed to one of the most basic imperatives of Roman traditional ideology: to exercise one's *virtus* in service of the *respublica* in return for worldly glory (facing *Fortuna*'s vicious attacks).

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[1] *Conf.* VI. vi (9).

[2] The need of a more secular biography on Augustine's early life has been mentioned and fulfilled by C. Lepelley in two broadly similar articles: '*Spes saeculi*: le milieu social d'Augustin et ses ambitions séculières avant sa conversion', in *Congresso internazionale su S. Agustino nel xvi centenario della conversione, Roma, 15-20 settembre 1986*, Studia ephemeridis "Augustianarum" 24, (Rome, 1987a), pp. 99-117, and 'Un aspect de la conversion d'Augustin: La rupture avec ses ambitions sociales et politiques', *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 88 (1987b), 229-246.

# 1. THE *AURELII* OF THAGASTE

Augustine's full name before his episcopate had been Aurelius Augustinus; only when consecrated bishop of Hippo, did he assume his Christian name Augustinus Hipponiensis.[3] Forsaking one's gentile name - in this case "Aurelius" - indicated the breaking with the vanities of worldly life, because the use of this patronymic was, at that time, a mark of the social elite; perhaps it also presented a rupture with the human family for the sake of the Church, since the newly consecrated bishop became at once the "father" of the Christian community.[4] When highlighting the worldly ambitions of the young Augustine, it seems appropriate to reclaim for the time being his former gentile name Aurelius.[5] To make a less elaborate distinction between the Augustine publicly dedicated to *spes saeculi*, and the converted Augustine, usually the Latin form "Augustinus" will be used instead of "Aurelius Augustinus", whenever the worldly Augustine is meant. Following short biography presents thus the (worldly) life of (Aurelius) Augustinus, an ambitious Roman provincial, who - at least outwardly - conformed to the traditional ideology in his endeavour to one day join Rome's privileged elite.[6]

The key parent in Augustinus' spiritual development had been his mother Monnica. From a more secular perspective, his father (the *pater familias*) had the greatest impact.[7] Aurelius Augustinus was born on 13 November AD 354 as the son of Aurelius Patricius, a *decurion* in the modest North African town of Thagaste, situated in the province of *Numidia Consularis*.[8] As a member of the local town council, Patricius had to perform a range of municipal duties, including maintenance of the high standard of public service, provision of local entertainments, and tax collecting.[9] He adhered to the traditional Roman religion,

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[3] C. Lepelley 1987a, p. 103.

[4] C. Lepelley 1987a, p. 103. He bases this idea on the work of H.-G. Pflaum (*L'onomastique latine* (Paris, 1977), p. 435).

[5] The reader could argue that ever since his reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* Augustinus had tempered his enthusiasm for worldly riches and honours. This is true, but the facts are that publicly he nevertheless kept on pursuing these worldly goods. More importantly, under certain conditions, Roman tradition allowed for a distinguished person to withdraw from public life and to seek a life of contemplation. Even with a mind converted to a quest for Truth, Augustine could have remained safely within the confines of traditional Roman ideology, and was planning to, until his conversion to Christianity. This will be more extensively discussed in the section on the Cassiciacum dialogues.

[6] For a chronological table of Augustine's life and a map of his journeys, see *Appendix A* and *C*.

[7] Augustine notoriously downgraded the event of his father's death in his *Confessiones* by relating it in "a mere footnote of a footnote" (*Conf.* III. iv (7)). In *De Academicis*, one of the Cassiciacum dialogues, he does not forget to mention his father's passing when writing to Romanianus. This indicates that in this dialogue he was complying to the more traditional Roman point of view, in that the death of one's father was an event of consequence in life. On the relations within the household, in particular between the son and the pater *familias*, see B.D. Shaw, 'The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine', *Past and Present* 115 (1987), 3-51.

[8] POSSIDIUS, *Vita Augustini*, I.1: 'de numero curialium'.

[9] This meant, among other things, making sure that the public baths wre properly heated, and organizing circus-shows (P. Brown 2000, p. 51).

which seemed natural for a man who performed some of the time-honoured tasks of the Roman nobility, albeit on a more modest, small-scale level.

The *ordo decurionum* had been made hereditary in an official attempt to halt the continual depletion of town councils.[10] Aurelius Augustinus was thus officially "predestined" to take up his father's position in his hometown, as part of his inheritance. In practice, however, escape from such a "fate" was possible, for instance, by securing a municipal teaching post. If Augustinus managed to acquire the prestigious title of *clarissimus*, he would formally join the Roman senatorial order, so that he and his descendants were granted lifelong immunity from the municipal duties in their hometown. Another possible escape route for dissatisfied *decuriones* was to join the Catholic clergy, but then, they were forced to forfeit their worldly possessions.[11]

Although Aurelius Augustinus officially belonged to a family of the local elite, two aspects considerably played down the *Aurelii*'s elevated status of *honestiores*.[12] Thagaste was an obscure, modest provincial town. Its *curiales* obviously did not enjoy the same prestige as, for instance, those of Carthage and Hippo.[13] Secondly, the *Aurelii* of Thagaste should even be located in the lower region of this local elite. Augustine[14] informs us that Patricius' estate was rather small,[15] and a passage in *Confessiones* makes clear that his father was not wealthy compared to many other citizens of Thagaste:

> Longinquioris apud Carthaginem peregrinationis sumptus praeparabantur animositate magis quam opibus patris, municipis Thagastensis admodum tenuis. [...] quis enim non extollebat laudibus tunc hominem, patrem meum, quod ultra vires rei familiaris suae impenderet filio quidquid etiam longe peregrinanti studiorum causa opus esset? Multorum enim civium longe opulentiorum nullum tale negotium pro liberis erat.[16]
>
> *Funds were being gathered in preparation for a more distant absence at Carthage, for which my father had more enthusiasm than cash, since he was a citizen of Thagaste with very modest resources. [...] At that time, who was not full of praise for the man, my father, because he spent money on his son beyond the means of his estate, when that was necessary to finance an education entailing a long journey. For many citizens of far greater wealth did no such effort on behalf of their children.*

This excerpt deals with Patricius' plan to send his talented son to the prestigious, but expensive, university at faraway Carthage. Augustinus had to interrupt his studies for a year (AD 369-370), so that meanwhile, his father could scrape together the necessary funds for

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[10] See also the section 1.2.2. in the chapter on (Neo-)Patonism.

[11] There seem to have been some periods in Augustinus' life wherein he escaped his duties without having obtained the officially required immunity (See *Appendix D*).

[12] POSSIDIUS, *Vita Augustini* I. 1: 'parentes honesti'.

[13] The census required to belong to the *curiales* of Thagaste cannot have been very high for such a modest town. One of the wealthiest citizens of Thagaste was Romanianus, the later benefactor of Augustine.

[14] The advantage of using on the one hand the name (Aurelius) Augustinus when talking about the young Augustine, and Augustine for the Christian bishop helps us to be aware that *Confessiones* was a later (Christian) interpretation of his former life, and does not tell us what he thought of it at the time itself.

[15] AUGUSTINE, *Epistulae* cxxvi.

[16] *Conf.* II. iii (5).

this major enterprise. Although Augustine rather depreciatingly reports in *Confessiones* that many citizens praised Patricius for his efforts, at the time, he must have been very grateful for having been given such a golden opportunity: his privileged education laid the foundation for his later worldly success. Despite his father's efforts, additional funding was still required. A local grandee, Romanianus, who clearly belonged to the cream of Thagaste's nobility, stepped in to sponsor Augustinus' further education.[17]

One should not immediately conclude that the future of the *Aurelii* was so gloomy, that it was almost imperative for Augustinus to try to escape his "predestined" impoverished life at Thagaste.[18] More likely, the family was more ambitious than others in trying to make use of the excellent opportunities Late Roman society provided to gain social promotion.[19] Not so much dire necessity, but high ambition was thus probably their main drive to invest in the intellectual talents of the promising boy Augustinus.

Both his parents held high worldly hopes for him, and made considerable efforts to offer him the best preparation possible to succeed in his worldly career.[20] They knew that Augustinus' worldly achievements would extend to the whole family. Even his friends could reasonably hope to benefit from his future success. From this perspective it has been said that Augustine's secular biography reads like

> a "Balzacian novel before its time": a family that chose to invest heavily in the education of one precocious older son [...] in whose career the whole family would advance.[21]

One can wonder how much pressure in the end must have come from his dependants (friends and family) to fulfil *their* worldly ambitions.[22] When Augustinus broke off his promising career after his conversion to Christianity, he must have disappointed at least some of his friends and relatives.

The challenge the young Aurelius Augustinus faced in life was big. His insignificant background and the family's considerable lack of assets were serious handicaps in achieving

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[17] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (3).

[18] Admittedly, with the shrinking of the town council - wealthy decurions abandoned their responsibilities via successful social promotion -, the same burden had to be carried by the remaining poorer members, such as the *Aurelii*. They might have been facing a continuously deteriorating situation at Thagaste. Perhaps they had been more affluent in the past, and already the many financial burdens had considerably reduced their wealth and standing.

[19] See the chapter on (Neo-)Platonism, 1.2.2.: "increased social mobility".

[20] *Conf.* II. iii (8); J.J. O'Meara (2001, p. 36): 'Both husband and wife, in fact, were consumed with worldly ambition for their son, and both were determined not to let anything stand in the way of that ambition'.

[21] J.J. O'Donnell, 'Augustine: his Times and Lives', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Eleonore Stump and N. Kretzman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 8-25 (p. 17, with reference to C. Lepelley (1987b, p. 243) for the expression: "Balzacian novel before its time"). See also J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 330: 'In Augustine's rise, they would profit all'.

[22] AUGUSTINE, *Soliloquia* (I.xi (18)) touches upon this issue: '*Suppose it appeared that you would persuade many to seek wisdom if your authority were increased by having honours showered upon you*'.

their so much desired social advancement. In such circumstances, luck - or one could say the benevolence of *Fortuna* - often became a decisive factor.[23]

## 2. A STUDENT AT CARTHAGE

From a worldly point of view, Aurelius Augustinus' life really becomes worthy of note, when he began his studies at the distant university of Carthage in AD 370.[24] It offered him the best education possible on the African continent, and, needless to say, he excelled in his rhetorical studies (autumn AD 370- summer AD 374).[25]

Carthage was the ideal place in Africa to catch the eye of influential citizens. A talented but humble provincial greatly needed the aid and recommendations of powerful men to succeed in his worldly ambitions. Augustinus' substantial reliance on others - remember Romanianus sponsoring his education - can be perceived as being in greater need of *Fortuna*'s favour: he simply came from too humble and poor a background to enjoy a reassuring degree of self-sufficiency.

During his student years at Carthage some important changes occurred in Augustinus' personal life. When he was barely sixteen years old, his father died (late AD 370, or early AD 371).[26] From now on, the financial responsibility for his studies rested mainly on the shoulders of his mother Monnica, while the share of Romanianus' grant to complete his studies undoubtedly increased.[27] Augustinus also started living with a woman of low social standing (c. AD 371[28]). Before long, they had a son named Adeodatus (born in the summer of AD 372). Needless to say, having two dependents made his living costs significantly greater.

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[23] In his early years Augustinus nearly died (*Conf.* I. xi (17)). His health must have been one of those uncontrollable factors which at any time could have ruthlessly thwarted the family's ambitions.

[24] He had followed his "primary" school in Thagaste, and he later went to Madauros for further grammar education and already some rhetorical instruction.

[25] *Conf.* III. iii (6).

[26] *Conf.* III. iv (7).

[27] That Romanianus must already have stepped in financially before the death of Patricius is shown in AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. i (2): 'Tu me adolescentulum pauperem ad peregrina studia pergentem, et domo et sumptu, et, quod plus est, animo excepisti. Tu patre orbatum amicitia consolatus es, hortatione animasti, ope adjuvisti' ('*When I was a poor youth, and proceeding to study far away, you opened your home to me, your resources, and, what is more, your heart. When I was deprived of my father, you consoled me with your friendship, you inspired me with your encouragement, and helped me with your money*').

[28] This may have happened even before his arrival at Carthage, during his year of idleness at Thagaste! (J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 207). This idea is picked up by G. Wills (1999, pp. 15-17). However, the latter abbreviated the passage of J.J. O'Donnell incorrectly. As a result, the year AD 370 in his quotation wrongly relates to the birth of Adeodatus, rather than to the start of the liaison between Augustinus and his mistress.

## 2.1. "Private Conversion" to Philosophy

When eighteen years old (end of AD 372 - AD 373) something happened which would have a lasting impact on the worldly aspirations of Augustinus, and his ultimate goal in life. As part of the school curriculum he had to read Cicero's book *Hortensius*, and it aroused an undying passion within him for the study of philosophy.[29] Cicero's book made him realize that the worldly rewards of glory, honours and riches, - i.e. the goods of *Fortuna* -, could not provide true happiness; instead, the search for Wisdom was commended.[30] It is hard to underestimate the importance of his first "conversion", not least for this present study. Later, even as a Christian bishop, Augustine would still acknowledge the tremendous impact this pagan book had on him. Reading Cicero's *Hortensius* was for him the moment when he commenced his spiritual journey towards Christianity. 'surgere coeperam ut ad te redirem' (*'I began to rise up to return to You'*), he writes in *Confessiones*, 'Quomodo ardebam, deus meus, quomodo ardebam revolare a terrenis ad te' (*'My God, how I burned with longing to leave earthly things and fly back to You'*).[31]

From that moment on, he could never again be fully content with merely a pursuit of worldly riches and honours in his life. Instead, he began to wish to have plenty of time available for his search for Wisdom. E. Kevane observed that the *Hortensius* made him change 'his major, as we say today, from Law to Rhetoric and the teaching profession, for only there at this time could a man devote himself professionally to the study of philosophy'.[32] Augustinus nevertheless had to restrain his quest because of his studies, which were preparing him for a successful worldly career. He used as much time as he

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[29] Many scholars write that Augustinus was nineteen years when he read the book (e.g., G. Wills 1999, p. 25: 'But then, when he was nineteen, he came across Cicero's dialogue *Hortensius*...'; P.G. Kuntz, 'St. Augustine's Quest for Truth: The Adequacy of a Christian Philosophy', *Augustinian studies* 13 (1982), 1-21 (p. 1): 'The personal quest is said by Augustine to have begun when he was nineteen, upon reading the *Hortensius* of Cicero'.

[30] It is an ironic twist of fate, that one of the writings of Cicero, who so strongly maintained that one should actively serve one's *respublica*, laid the foundation of Augustinus' eventual repudiation of this call. But in *Hortensius*, wherein he needed to defend the value of philosophy, he wrote: *'It is not the discovery, but the mere search for wisdom which should be preferred even to the discovery and to ruling over nations and to the physical delights available to me at a nod'* (*Conf.* VIII. vii (17)).

[31] *Conf.* III. iv (8). How can a pagan book devoted to philosophy become the start of his return to the Christian God? The explanation is simple: what Cicero meant by Wisdom, Augustinus closely linked with Christ. Therefore, the moment Augustinus was eager to find Wisdom, he could afterwards say, he sought to find the Christian God.

[32] E. Kevane, 'Christian Philosophy: The Intellectual Side of Augustine's Conversion', *Augustinian Studies* 17 (1986), 47-83, (p. 49). He, too, places Augustine's reading of Cicero's *Hortenius* (p. 48) in his twentieth year insteqd of in his nineteenth year. For his family's intentions to make him a lawyer: see *Conf.* III. iii (6). However, one should add that becoming a lawyer required further expensive studies. His decision not to pursue a legal career could have had therefore also financial reasons. His close friend Alypius, who came from a wealthier family, studied law, and he seemed to have been able to have sufficient time off, to join Augustinus in his search for Wisdom.

could spare in reading philosophical works, and this with considerable success.[33] He would never allow his philosophical interests to endanger his worldly ambitions. His inner "philosophical conversion" did not prevent him from making every effort to advance within society, as he did not want to jeopardize his own worldly aspirations, and those of his family and friends.

## 2.2. "Private Conversion" to Manicheism

Augustinus' discovery of philosophy by reading a pagan book also led to a change in his religious allegiance. Up till then, he had been a catechumen in the Catholic Church. His mother was responsible for his Christian upbringing, and it had welded in his mind an indissoluble bond between Wisdom and Christ.[34] In Cicero's work there was no trace of Christ's name. Consequently, his newly discovered passion for the search of Wisdom made him turn to the Bible. The sacred text of his childhood religion was not satisfying either: thoroughly trained to become an eloquent speaker, he thought the style of the Bible embarrassingly uncouth, and therefore completely at odds with the grand truth it professed to possess.[35] Just as Wisdom was firmly linked with Christ in Augustinus' mind, just so was Wisdom and eloquent expression deemed to be inseparable in Roman culture. The Bible simply could not compete with the refined eloquence Cicero's writings so profusely displayed.

There was within the intellectual milieu of Carthage an alternative at hand, which seemed tailored to capitalize on the apparent weaknesses of Catholicism for cultivated men who were not strong in their faith. A particular form of the exotic religion of Manicheism,[36] founded by the Persian prophet Mani (born AD 216 in Babylonia), flourished at the university of Carthage through an

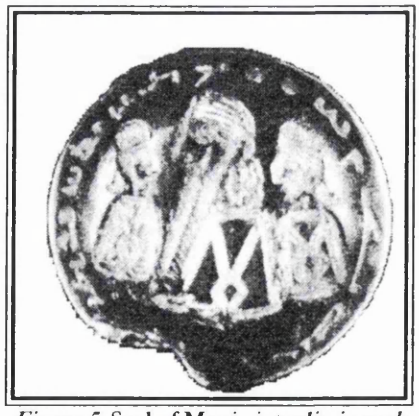

***Figure 5*: Seal of Mani, *intaglio in rock crystal***

[33] He managed, for instance, to understand Aristoteles' *Categories* without any assistance (*Conf.* IV. xvi (28)).
[34] *Conf.* III. iv (8).
[35] *Conf.* III. v (9).
[36] See J. van Oort, *Mani, Manichaeism & Augustine: The Rediscovery of Manichaeism & Its Influence on Western Christianity*, 2nd rev. edn (Tblisi: Academy of Sciences of Georgia, 1997), esp. 'Lecture three: Augustine and Manichaeism', pp. 39-53; S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), esp. chapter v: '*Ingens fabula et longum mendacium*: Augustine and Manichaeism', pp. 117-153 and L.H. Grondijs, 'Numidian Manicheism in Augustinus' Time', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 9 (1954), 21-42.

ardently proselytising group of intellectuals.[37] Many aspects of the Carthaginian form of Manicheism recommended this religion to Augustinus, modified as it was to lure cultivated Christians away from what the Manichees considered to be a reprehensibly naïve faith. They were very keen to talk about Christ,[38] and claimed to present the true Christianity in the hope of winning over impressionable Christians.[39]

The Manichean version of Christianity remedied the incongruity between content and style of the Bible. In their marvellously decorated books Christ's name was carefully embedded in elegant language, worthy of enclosing so great a Wisdom. At the same time it promised to satisfy Augustinus' recent philosophical interests by appealing to reason rather than to authority in accepting their doctrine.[40] They revealed many contradictions in the Catholic faith through logical reasoning, and this critical attitude must have been very appealing to Augustinus, who was keen on rational debate. The combination of the name of Christ, their beautiful language, and the full acknowledgement of man's reasoning capacities in religious matters, must at the time have been irresistible to the mind of the young Augustinus, and he became a passionate adherent of the sect.[41]

Manicheism also provided a solution for one of the most agonizing problems Augustinus was to encounter in life: the origin of evil.[42] Catholic Christianity had the difficult task of explaining the presence of evil when a perfect, good and all-powerful God had created all there was. It seemed hard to avoid the conclusion that, consequently, God also had to be the creator of evil.[43] The Manichees offered a simple, and logic alternative: unlike Christianity, it propagated a dualistic belief system. It understood the flux of the world as a continuing struggle between two basic forces: the Kingdom of Good and Evil.[44]

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[37] P. Brown 2000, p. 43.

[38] *Conf.* III. vi (10): '*In their mouths were the devil's traps and a birdlime compounded of a mixture of the syllables of Your name, and that of the other Lord Jesus Christ, and that of the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. These names were never absent from their lips*'.

[39] See for instance G. Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* rev. edn. (Norwich: The Canterburry Press Norwich, 1986, especially pp. 59-60); S.N.C. Lieu, *Manicheism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 117-153 (Chapter 5 '*Ingens fabula et longum mendacium*: Augustine and Manichaeism').

[40] AUGUSTINE, *De utilitate credendi* i. (2): '*You know, Honoratus, that I fell among these people for no other reason than that they declared that they would put aside all overawing authority, and by pure and simple reason would bring to God those who were willing to listen to them, and so deliver them from all error*'.

[41] G.R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 13: 'For a long time Augustine had great hopes of the Manichees. Their scheme seemed to combine the advantages of the Christian explanation with those of the philosopher's explanation'.

[42] AUGUSTINE, *De libero arbitrio* I. ii (4): '*That [i.e. why we do evil] is a question that gave me great trouble when I was a young man. It wearied me and drove me into the arms of heretics*';

[43] This problem Augustine attempted to tackle in the Cassiciacum dialogue *De ordine*, which will be discussed later on.

[44] Augustine gives in *Conf.* VII. xiv. (20) a very brief explanation why the Manichean dualistic position seemed satisfactory at the time concerning the question on the origin of evil: '*Because my soul did not dare to say that my God displeased me, it refused to attribute to You whatever was displeasing. Hence it came to adopt the opinion that there were two substances*'.

Because nothing but good could arise from God, there had to exist an opposing principle, independent of the good, and not created, to explain the existence of evil:

> *When the Holy Spirit came, he revealed to us the way of Truth and taught us that there are two Natures, that of Light and that of Darkness, separate one from the other from the Beginning.*[45]

The cosmic invasion of the *Kingdom of Light* by the *Kingdom of Darkness* was mirrored in each individual. The good, isolated soul is in turn invaded by an uncontrollable, alien force of evil.[46] The teaching that there existed an untarnished part within him, "a crumb of divine substance", gave great satisfaction to Augustinus' ego.[47] Whenever he sinned, this was due to an alien nature within him, so that any feeling of guilt was not necessary.[48]

There were other, more worldly reasons why Aurelius Augustinus felt attracted to Manicheism, and ready to apostatize from his childhood religion. He must have felt privileged to study at the most renowned university of Africa. Considering the fact that even the substantial efforts of his family were not sufficient to pay for the expenses, we can safely assume that Augustinus must have been one of the poorest and humblest students attending this leading university. A change of religious allegiance might have been one of the corollaries of his entry into a new, elevated environment, where he saw his naïve childhood religion ridiculed by adherents of an, at first sight, intellectually superior form of Christianity.[49] An ambitious Augustinus was more ready to listen attentively to the proselytising actions of ardent intellectual Manichees, than to the emphatic entreaties of his uneducated mother, Monnica, who desperately wished her oldest son would remain within the Catholic fold, and simply accept its teachings with an unbending faith.[50]

Coming of age, Augustinus thus rejected his childish religion to embrace an exquisite, eloquent, and intellectually superior form of "Christianity".[51] This coincided with his social promotion from a humble destined-to-be *decurion* of small town Thagaste, to a promising provincial, who became part of the prominent intellectual scene of North Africa, and who

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[45] *Manichean Psalm-Book* CCXXIII, quoted from G.R. Evans 1982, p. 14.

[46] P. Brown 2000, p. 41 n. 5. In the chapter on *Confessions* it will be investigated why such a theory was especially pleasing to Augustinus at the time.

[47] The expression comes from P. Brown 2000, p. 39, referring to *Conf.* IV. xvi (31) : *'I thought that You, Lord God and Truth, were like a luminous body of immense size and myself a bit of that body'* ('frustum de illo corpore').

[48] *Conf.* V. x (18).

[49] P. Brown (2000, p. 43) mentions the exclusivity of the particular kind of Manicheism Augustinus fell for: 'The Manicheism of Augustine was the Manicheism of a specific group, of the cultivated intelligentsia of the university of Carthage and of the small-town notables of Thagaste'. See also *Conf.* III. v (9) - vi (10): 'turgidus fastu mihi grandis videbar. Itaque incidi in homines superbe delirantes, carnales nimis et loquaces' (*'Puffed up with pride, I considered myself a mature adult. That explains why I fell in with men proud of their slick talk, very earthly-minded and loquacious'*.

[50] J.J. O'Meara 1952, p. 51; J.J. O'Donnell, 1992, II, p. 176: 'It seems clear that a Manichean charge of superstition levelled against the religion of Augustine's boyhood could have found in the eighteen-year-old student a sympathetic ear'.

[51] G.R. Evans 1982, p. 14: 'They [sc. the Manichees] appealed to his intellectual vanity. An austere, rather obscurantist sect, they offered him a means of showing that he was different from the common run'.

could start looking forward to a distinguished worldly career.[52] Soon he himself became a zealous Manichean proselyte, attacking the Catholic faith with his extraordinary intellectual skills. He successfully converted many of his friends to this fantastic religion, even in his hometown Thagaste, to which he returned after his studies. One of his more noteworthy successes was the conversion of his patron Romanianus, his friend Alypius, and the anonymous friend, who died so early in life.[53]

In becoming a Manichee during his student years at Carthage, Aurelius Augustinus found himself accepted within a closely-knit, supportive group of warm friends, some of whom must have been influential figures.[54] A ready-made network of small Manichean cells became available to him, with tentacles reaching as far as Rome, which could help him to further his career.[55] Significantly, Augustinus never became one of the "Elect" of the Manichees, but remained a second-class "Auditor", a "Hearer". It meant, among other things, that he did not have to give up his worldly aspirations.

> ut me in illo gradu quem vocant Auditorum tenerem, ut hujus mundi spem atque negotia non dimitterem.[56]
>
> *...so that I remained in the grade they call "hearers" so that I might not give up worldly hopes and duties.*

The pull of *spes saeculi* strengthened by the worldly expectations of his family and friends, still appeared to be greater than the Manichean call to lead an exemplary, ascetic life as one of their Elects.[57] Nevertheless, he intended to advance one daty within the hierarchy.

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[52] Augustine gives in *De utilitate credendi* as the main reason for joining the Manichees that 'they appealed to his intellectual vanity. An austere, rather obscurantist sect, they offered him a means of showing that he was different from the common run [...] The very arrogance of the Manichean claim appealed to them' (G.R. Evans 1982, p. 12). See also T. K. Scott, *Augustine: His Thougth in Context* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995): 'Being an ambitious young student and teacher from a marginal small-town family, he had little trouble abandoning the primitive Catholicism of his devout mother for the fashionable Manicheism of the Carthaginian elite' (p. 9). See also P. Brown 2000, p. 38.

[53] P. Brown 2000, p. 43. For Romanianus, see *De Academicis* II. iii (8); Alypius: *Conf.* VI. vii (12); unnamed friend of Thagaste: *Conf.* IV. iv (7).

[54] The fact that the imperial government regularly outlawed the Manichean religion probably strengthened the solidarity within the covert organisation. In AD 372 Valentinian had prohibited the Manichees from meeting under pain of a fine or banishment and confiscation (J.J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine: The Growth of St. Augustine's Mind Up to His Conversion*, rev. edn (New York: Alba House, 2001), p. 94).

[55] S.N.C. Lieu 1985, p. 137.

[56] AUGUSTINE, *De utilitate credendi* i. (2); he wrote this work (AD 391) to his (former) Manichean friend Honorius: '...vitae hujus mundi eram implicatus, tenebrosam spem gerens, de pulchritudine uxoris, de pompa divitiarum, de inanitate honorum caeterisque noxiis et perniciosis voluptatibus. Haec enim omnia, quod te non latet, cum studiose illos audirem, cupere et sperare non desistebam. Neque hoc eorum doctrinae tribuo: fateor enim et illos sedulo monere, ut ista caveantur' ('*I was involved in the life of this world, nursing shadowy hopes of a beautiful wife, of the pomp of riches, of empty honours and other pernicious and deadly pleasures. All these things, as you know, I did not cease to desire and hope for when I was their [i.e. the Manichees] zealous hearer. I do not attribute this to their teaching, for I confess that they carefully warned me to beware of these things*') (AUGUSTINE, *De utilitate credendi* I. (3)).

[57] See also S.N.C. Lieu 1985, p. 143: 'The Manicheans regarded the asceticism of their Elect as the real gospel of Christ'.

In the end, the disappointing encounter with the Manichean bishop Faustus, made him at last cease striving towards making any further progress within the sect.[58]

# 3. THE WORLDLY CAREER OF "AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS"

The particular stages in Augustinus' very successful career correspond with distinct geographical places, leading him from obscure Thagaste, via Carthage and "senatorial" Rome, to Milan where the imperial court of the Latin West was now stationed. More strikingly, as will become clear further on, the phases in Augustinus' personal (religious-)philosophical convictions roughly chimed in with the prevailing attitude of each environment he moved in. This should not be regarded as mere coincidence. Augustinus hoped to join the established cultivated elite, and therefore some degree of assimilation with that elite was inevitable, especially because he needed to obtain influential friends for further promotion. He seemed eager to absorb much of the fashionable ideas circulating in every superior surrounding, and was often embarrassingly confronted with the primitive ideas he was holding. Undoubtedly, this sense of shame was strongly linked with his humble African background. Each time Augustinus moved up an echelon in society, he obtained - or he thought he obtained - a more advanced knowledge.

| **Thagaste** | **Carthage** | **Rome** | **Milan** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Young boy (AD 354 – AD 370)* | 2) University student (AD 370 – AD 374) | 5) Private teacher of Rhetoric AD 383 | 6) Imperial appointed professor of Rhetoric and public orator AD 384 – AD 386 |
| *Christianity* | *Manicheism* | *Ciceronian Scepticism* | *(Neo-)Platonism* |
| 3) Grammar teacher (AD 374 – AD 376) | 4) Municipal professor of Rhetoric (AD 376 – AD 383) | | *(Christianity)* |
| *Manicheism* | *Manicheism* | | |

* AD 366 - 369: studying at Madauros

## 3.1. Thagaste

When Aurelius Augustinus finished his education at Carthage (presumably in the summer of AD 374, possibly AD 375),[59] he returned to his hometown. There, he began teaching

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[58] *Conf.* IV. viii (13).

grammar, with financial (and other) support of Romanianus, his patron.[60] In this way he seems to have avoided his municipal duties as a *decurion*.

## 3.2. Carthage

One or two years later his worldly ambition led him to the public position of professor of Rhetoric at Carthage (AD 376), the city in which not so long ago he had been a student.[61] Romanianus financed the journey, and supported in general his new ambition, although his children (among them no doubt, Licentius, who later joined Augustinus at Cassiciacum) would then lose their grammar teacher.[62]

As a young professor of Rhetoric in Carthage, the second city in the Western Empire, Augustinus won a prestigious poetic competition. This brought him to the attention of the distinguished Roman nobleman Vindicianus, who was at the time proconsul of Africa (AD 377).[63] A few years later (AD 380), Augustinus published his first work entitled *De pulchro et apto*, which regrettably has not come down to us.[64] This period seems to have been marked by sincere, but rather unhurried, efforts to gain greater renown. In particular his attempt to catch the eye of the rhetor-philosopher Hierius of Rome, by making him the dedicatee of his first publication, shows that Augustinus must have had still higher ambitions, while his passion for philosophy had not abated.[65] The philosophical content of the work surely must have been the fruit of many a pleasant hour of rational inquiry during his spare time.[66]

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[59] There is uncertainty about the length of time Augustinus taught in his hometown (and when). H. Chadwick (1991, xxviv) thinks he taught two years at Thagaste (AD 373 – AD 375), J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 203) and P. Brown (2000, p. 3) presume this was only one year (AD 375 – AD 376); H.I. Marrou (1957, p. 20): one year (AD 373 – AD 374).

[60] *Conf.* IV. vii (12); AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (3).

[61] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (3): 'Tu Carthaginem illustrioris professionis gratia remeantem, cum tibi soli et meorum nulli consilium meum spemque aperuissem,...' '*When I disclosed to you alone [sc. Romanianus] among all my friends my hope and intention of returning to Carthage to seek a more brilliant career...*'

[62] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (3).

[63] *Conf.* IV. iii (5).

[64] *Conf.* IV. xiii (20).

[65] *Conf.* IV. xiv (21); G. Bonner (1986, p. 65) remarks: 'There are few better ways of attracting man's attention than by dedicating a book to him'.

[66] How much of the philosophical conceptions is influenced by Manicheism, is hard to discern, but at least its materialism and idea of evil is compatible with Manichean belief (see G, Bonner, 1986, pp. 65-66). Already we can see that Augustinus' philosophical inquiry was channelled by the tenets of his religious belief.

## 3.3. Rome

Before long, Augustinus' worldly ambition made him follow in the footsteps of his example Hierius, and he began teaching in Rome.[67] With the help of his Manichean(!) influential friends, Augustinus set up a private school of Rhetoric in this venerable city (AD 383). Although he had considerable intellectual doubts about his allegiance to Manicheism near the end of his stay in Carthage,[68] he seemed not embarrassed to rely heavily on these profitable contacts to further his career. Not surprisingly, when he fell ill on his arrival, it was one of his Manichean associates who looked after him in his house.[69]

At Rome Augustinus adopted what seems to have been a moderate mode of Ciceronian scepticism.[70] This more prudent approach towards finding "Truth" probably had already started in Carthage, especially after his disappointing encounter with the Manichean bishop Faustus, who could not answer his penetrating questions.[71] A remarkable correspondence can thus be noticed between Augustinus' adopted philosophical stance, and the prevailing attitude of the milieu wherein he now was moving, namely the traditional seat of the ancient nobility. No doubt, his restrained form of scepticism was in tune with the outlook on life of many distinguished noblemen at Rome.[72] On the whole, they disdained religious fanaticism, Christian and Manichean alike. Nevertheless, Augustinus continued associating himself not only with Manichean Hearers, but also with their Elect.[73] Their religion still had something to recommend itself to Augustinus: warm friendship among a close group of members to which he could turn if needed, and the comforting idea that when he himself fell short of the standards he accepted, it was not he himself who was sinning, but an alien nature within. What made him intellectually refrain from considering the Catholic faith to be a valuable alternative for the disappointing Manichean religion was, among other things, that he thought it appalling having to believe that God had the shape of a human figure. There

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[67] J.J. O'Meara (2001, p. 94-95): 'There can be no doubt that an important motive for doing so [i.e. going to Rome] was to improve his position, which in effect he did'; So also G. Bonner (1986, p. 69): 'We must not underestimate the pull of ambition as a motive, perhaps not fully recognized, in Augustine's removal to the capital'.

[68] AUGUSTINE, *De utilitate credendi* viii (20).

[69] *Conf.* V. x (18).

[70] *Conf.* V. x (19).

[71] *Conf.* V. vi (11) - vii (12). The more Augustinus despaired of ever finding Truth, the more he focused on his worldly aspirations. Perhaps this could further explain his renewed interest to advance in his profession in Rome, and to apply for the chair of Rhetoric at Milan.

[72] J.J. O'Meara (2001, p. 101): 'Perhaps his very coming to Rome, added to all his disappointments with Manicheism, provoked in him the mood of scepticism. Rome would have represented for him more Cicero than either Christ or Mani'.

[73] *Conf.* V. x (18-19).

further remained the important problem of evil, which remained unsolved within Catholic thinking.[74]

## 3.4. Milan

Augustinus did not have to wait too long before his career took another major step forward. Rome, capital of the long-established *respublica* and the senate, had been for centuries the final destination of many ambitious Roman provincials. In Augustinus' time, however, the road of ambition did no longer end in this ancient city. If one sought after real power, one needed to go one station further north, to Milan, where the imperial court resided. It so happened that in AD 384 the public teaching post of Rhetoric had become vacant in this city.[75] For what turned out to be the last time, Augustinus once more counted on his influential Manichean friends to secure this high-profile post. The famous pagan senator Symmachus was the City Prefect of Rome at the time,[76] and thus responsible for the appointment. Perhaps during his stay at Carthage as proconsul of North Africa (AD 373), he had made the acquaintance with some of the Manichean African noblemen who were now supporting Augustinus' candidature.[77] Maybe even Augustinus' Manichean past was an asset in his application.[78] The pagan Symmachus may have been disturbed at the time about the predominance of Christianity, which had begun to bear down more vigorously on those who preferred to remain loyal to the traditional Roman religion.[79]

After a successful test before Symmachus, Augustinus was awarded the post.[80] He moved to Milan at the beginning of autumn AD 384, and started to teach rhetoric, no doubt, to the cream of the Milanese noble youth. Soon, Augustinus was also given the honour of delivering official public orations. In his role as a minister of information *avant la lettre*, he became even more a distinguished public figure. One of the highlights of his career undoubtedly must have been the panegyric he delivered at the inauguration of the consul

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[74] *Conf.* V. x (19-20).
[75] *Conf.* V. xiii (23).
[76] Symmachus had become City Prefect in June or July AD 384, and held the office for a period of eight months, which helps us dating Augustinus' move to Milan (J. Matthews 1975, p. 16).
[77] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 320.
[78] This is the opinion of, for instance, C. Lepelley (1987a, p. 108): 'Le chef du parti païen au Sénat était assurément satisfait de désigner un non catholique'. Caution is needed, however, because we do not know, for instance, how serious the rift was between Symmachus and (his distant relative!) Ambrose, the champion of the Catholic cause at Milan.
[79] This point is highly debated. P. Courcelle and P. Brown have made this suggestion, J. Matthews and J.J. O'Donnell question it. Notice, however, that the year of the appointment (AD 384) is also the year Symmachus sent his famous *relationes*, wherein he pleads for pluralism when it comes to religious rites and allegiance. This could be an element in favour of the view that religious conviction had some weight in his appointment.
[80] *Conf.* V. xiii (23).

Bauto (beginning of the year AD 385), and probably, before that, the panegyric for the *decennalia* of emperor Valentinian II on 22 November AD 384.[81]

His teaching career clearly had reached by now its peak. His mother Monnica and his brother Navigius considered his recent successes substantial enough to make the great crossing from Africa to join Augustinus at Milan.[82] They apparently took with them also two of his nephews, Lartidianus and Rusticus. The number of (family) dependants at Milan had considerably increased, since Augustinus also had his unnamed concubine, and his son Adeodatus to support. He was nevertheless expected to provide for all, which was 'no small order for a speech professor just establishing himself'.[83]

If one looks back from this point in time at Augustinus' career, one notices how lucrative this thus far had been. Born as the son of a relatively poor *decurion* from the insignificant African town of Thagaste, he had worked himself up with the support of (mainly Manichean) friends to become professor of Rhetoric at the imperial capital of Milan. In this sense, one could say that *Fortuna* already had been very favourable towards him.[84] He had the "luck" that his father was willing to make strenuous efforts to send him to the university of Carthage, and that he was noticed by a local grandee, Romanianus, who helped to fund his education at Carthage. The latter supported also his first steps in his teaching profession at Thagaste and later at Carthage.[85] With the indispensable help of his Manichean connections, he could set up his own private school at Rome. Finally, not long after that, the chair of Rhetoric happened to become available in Milan. Also J. Matthews notices the lucky timing of this vacancy: 'Before long, there intervened another of those accidents of fortune without which, in the society of the late empire, the most remarkable of talents would (and no doubt did) remain unrecognised'.[86] Augustinus' credentials seemed impeccable at the time. No one could have foreseen that within two years time he would not merely resign from the post he so eagerly had solicited, but even throw away for good his worldly career.

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[81] I am following in this H. Chadwick 1991, p. 97 n. 10.

[82] This was presumably in the summer or autumn of AD 385. One should be aware that the crossing from the African continent to Italy in those days is somehow comparable with the crossing from Europe to America in the 19th century. It was a long and risky journey.

[83] Words of W.Th. Smith, *Augustine: His Life and Thought* (Georgia: John Knox Press, 1980), p. 45.

[84] See also H. Chadwick 1986, p. 32: 'Had he gone on to the secular career of which he dreamed, little more than his name might have been known to posterity, perhaps only as a striking instance of social mobility on the part of a clever young man from a relatively impecunious provincial family in the Numidian countryside, who had worked hard, and had the luck to enjoy some useful patronage'.

[85] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (3).

[86] J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court* AD 364–425 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 213.

# 4. MORE HONOURS AND RICHES IN ORDER TO ENJOY AN *OTIUM HONESTUM*

## 4.1. Working towards Further Honours and Riches

### 4.1.1. Setting the goal

Despite his humble background, even greater honours and riches were in store for a talented man such as Augustinus, who had excellent qualifications. He seems to have aspired to join the senatorial elite by acquiring the title *clarissmus*, which was attached to certain high-profile posts within the imperial service. He mentions in *Confessiones* his - rather modest - ambition to become the appointed governor of a minor province, a *praeses*.[87] This post was probably already sufficient to become a *clarissmus*. Such honour would greatly enhance his status in Roman society, boost his authority, and to grant him exemption from his inherited municipal duties. Moreover, a provincial governorship was also very lucrative. Becoming a senator via this appointment had the advantage that a private life of leisure devoted to the study of philosophy became financially viable, and publicly more respectable. What he would say or publish would be endowed with much more *auctoritas*, because of his privileged status within society.[88] Up till then, Aurelius Augustinus remained in the eyes of the (Milanese) nobility a poor North African provincial from a down-at-heel family despite his indisputable talents.[89]

### 4.1.2. Attending Ambrose's Church services

What Augustinus still lacked to succeed was the patronage of some influential men at the court. Pursuing his worldly career involved, as H. Chadwick remarks, 'the demeaning

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[87] *Conf.* VI. xi (19).

[88] Augustine refers to this aspect in *Soliloquia* I. xi (18) 'Quid, si etiam illud appareat, et multis te persuasurum esse sapientiam, si tibi de honore auctoritas creverit': '*Suppose it appeared that you would persuade many to seek wisdom if your authority were increased by having honours showered upon you...*'; he indirectly refers to the greater authority of the nobility when recounting the story of Victorinus in *Confessiones*: 'plus autem superbos tenet nomine nobilitatis et de his plures nomine auctoritatis' (*'Pride in aristocratic nobility enables him [= the devil] to hold sway especially over the upper class, and by their title and authority he dominates many more'*) (*Conf.* VIII. iv (9)).

[89] There are some glimpses of the denigrating attitude cultivated noblemen held towards him, for instance, his handicap of having a provincial accent (AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* II. xvii (45): *'Even I, for whom a thorough study of these matters has been a dire necessity, am nevertheless censured by the Italians for my pronunciation of words'*). There is further also, of course, the notorious word slander between bishop Julian of Eclanum and Augustine in the great Pelagian controversy, which occupied Augustine during the last years of his life. Julian came from a noble family, and sneeringly called Augustine "the Punic Aristotle" (AUGUSTINE, *contra Iulianum op. imp.* III, 199). According to P. Brown (2000, p. 385) he attempted to make Augustine's dominant view on Christianity, into a renewed barbaric Punic War (of the mind) against Italy.

process of calling on powerful men of influence vainly hoping to enlist their support for his secular ambitions'.[90] Many of his free afternoons were taken up by industriously soliciting the Milanese elite.[91]

In Milan, he had finally broken with his Manichean friends.[92] This meant that he could no longer fall back on their closely-knit organisation and friendship. Careerwise, this posed less of a problem. They were of little practical use in a milieu that considered Catholic Christianity to be the only true religion. In a hard-line approach, the emperor had recently directed severe legislation against the Manichean sect.[93] Any professed loyalty to their faith would have been detrimental to Augustinus' aspirations.[94]

*Figure 6*: Ambrose, 5th c. *mosaic* from Sant' Ambrogio, Milan

Above all, the renowned Ambrose, bishop of Milan, seems to have drawn Augustinus back to his childhood religion. Augustinus started to attend his Church services, but showed initially no interest in becoming a Christian, feeling quite comfortable in his recently adopted detached sceptic attitude. Ambrose had received Augustinus on his arrival surprisingly courteously,[95] even though he might have suspected that he might be one of those ambitious men 'who would become a Christian to marry a wife, and bend his knees in church to get a position from the Christian court'.[96] Augustinus was impressed by the kindness of the man at the time. An important motivation to attend the Catholic Church service was that bishop Ambrose's oratorical skills were renowned throughout the world. Undoubtedly, someone who had just been appointed chair of Rhetoric must have been keen to hear, even if merely out of

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[90] H. Chadwick 1991, p. xix.

[91] *Conf.* VI. xi (18).

[92] In *De beata vita* (I (4)) Augustinus states that he had freed himself of the Manichees already in Carthage, and especially after he had crossed the sea (i.e. going to Italy). This needs to be regarded only in an intellectual sense, since in *Confessiones* (V. xiii (23)) it becomes clear that he continued associating with them in Rome, even with some of the Elect. He also says that when he went to Milan, he was unaware at the time that this move would mean the final break with them.

[93] J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 327) writes in this context about 'his removal from the original circle of Manichean friends and associates he knew in Africa, followed by his apparent removal from any close contact with Manichean cultists on his removal from Rome to Milan'.

[94] A cynical view would therefore be that this open break with Augustinus' (Manichean) friends was expedient to his career. Augustinus had in the past made fully use of these contacts, and now that they had become a hindrance for further promotion, he finally abandoned them openly.

[95] *Conf.* V. xiii (23).

[96] P. Brown 2000, p. 72, referring to Ambrose *In ps.* CXVIII, 20.48 (PL xiv, 1490). To what extent Augustinus consciously wanted to make a good impression at the court by publicly attending its endorsed religion, while having no interest in its teachings, remains difficult to assess. He certainly had other motives, too.

curiosity, a celebrated orator at work.[97] Morever, powerful men had great respect for the noble and influential Ambrose, so that also the new milieu in which Augustinus had to find some footing, almost naturally steered him towards the cathedral of Milan.[98] This step was easier to make because his childhood religion had been the Catholic faith, and he had already distanced himself from Manicheism.

### 4.1.3. The Need for a Career Marriage

His worldly aspirations brought him to a crucial point in his life. Although he had the gift to make fairly easily contact with other people - even with those of a higher station in life -[99] it nevertheless became necessary to tighten relations with one of the eminent Milanese families, if he wanted to further his career. This would considerably elevate his standing among the elite, and make it easier to secure a profitable civil post. He also needed money to pay for the *suffragium*, seeing that all high-profile imperial posts were up for sale at the time. The necessary thing to do in order to overcome these shortcomings was to seek a wealthy, aristocratic bride.[100] Such a move would considerably enhance his status among the Milanese elite, and his bride's dowry would supply him with the necessary funds, or at least she would not be a financial burden to him, as his concubine was. His mother, more than Augustinus himself, became the driving force behind the whole process of arranging a career marriage.[101] C. Lepelley shrewdly takes it as a sign of the relative social standing of Augustinus' family that Monnica could have so easily access to the leading families of Milan.[102] However, this probably had a different reason: Monnica was not just "a petite provincial africain" at Milan. She was also a remarkable, devout Christian woman,

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[97] See *Conf.* V. xiii (23) - xiv (24) for his initially sole interest in Ambrose's verbal skills and not in his Catholic teaching.

[98] *Conf.* VI. iii (3).

[99] *Conf.* VI. xi (19).

[100] *Conf.* VI. xi (19): '*It would be necessary to marry a wife with some money to avert the burden of heavy expenditure*'. Notice that this avenue probably had been long ago anticipated, and this also by his Christian mother: '*She did not seek to restrain my sexual drive within the limit of the marriage bond [...] the reason why she showed no such concern was that she was afraid that the hope which she placed in me could be impeded by a wife. This was not the hope which my mother placed in you for the life to come, but the hope which my parents entertained for my career that I might do well out of the study of literature*' (*Conf.* II. iii (8)).

[101] *Conf.* VI. xiii (23): '*Pressure to have me married was not relaxed. Already I submitted my suit, and already a girl was promised to me principally through my mother's efforts*'. She presumed that marriage (with, no doubt, a Christian girl), besides helping her son's worldly ambitions, would bring him closer to 'the saving water of baptism' (*Conf.* VI. xiii (23)). J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 378) thinks that 'baptism was probably part of the marriage bargain with the distinguished catholic family', but this marriage did not need to imply an immediate baptism, considering the widespread reluctance to be baptized so early in life. A more cautious interpretation would be that Augustinus was to forego for good his earlier Manichean beliefs, and become a committed catechumen in the Catholic church, with the reasonable prospect of baptism (even if this came as late as on his deathbed).

[102] C. Lepelley 1987a, p. 110; J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, pp. 377-378.

abundantly praised by the influential bishop Ambrose.[103] It seems more likely that in her search for a suitable bride for her son, she was able to draw on the contacts she had made with distinguished Christian noble women who attended Ambrose's basilica.[104] Her relatively high repute was not so much based on the supposed status the *Aurelii* enjoyed in worldly society, but on the respect she commanded in the Catholic community of Milan.[105] Soon Monnica found a suitable girl, the only downside being that she was still two years under the legal age of marriage (which was set at twelve years), so that Augustinus needed to put on hold his career marriage and his further ambitions for a few more years.[106]

## 4.2. The Pull of Philosophy

### 4.2.1. The Failed Attempt to Establish a Philosophical Community

Meanwhile, amidst all his time-consuming secular activities,[107] Augustinus continued discussing philosophical topics with his friends, Alypius and Nebridius.[108] They seemed to have agreed to carry the burden of a secular career just a few years longer. The moment they sufficiently had feathered their nest with lucrative posts, they would retire to dignified leisured philosophy, without financial worries.[109]

In early AD 386 (or perhaps late AD 385) the small circle of Augustinus managed to involve several other friends (among them Romanianus) in a project to set up an Epicurean styled leisured community, devoted to the study of Wisdom.[110] They planned to amass

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[103] *Conf.* VI. ii (2). The reputation Monnica enjoyed in the Church is demonstrated by her leading role in the guarding of Ambrose's basilica, which Justina, the Arian wife of Valentinian I had claimed for Arian worship (*Conf.* IX. vii (15)).

[104] The fact that Monnica was looking for a Christian girl further supports the view that she above all was relying on her Church contacts to gain access to the Milanese elite for the benefit of her son's worldly aspirations, and her own spiritual aspirations towards him.

[105] Notice also that Augustinus refers to the great Manlius Theodorus as someone Monnica knows very well. 'Theodorus, quem bene nosti' (AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. xi (31)). It is therefore not surprising that the greatest contributions she made to the debates at Cassiciacum were in the little dialogue *De beata vita*, which was dedicated to this distinguished man.

[106] He had to dismiss his consort (the mother of his son Adeodatus) once the marriage deal was struck, because she was considered a hindrance to his marriage. He nevertheless took in another woman to satisfy his lust until the wedding (*Conf.* VI. xv (35).

[107] *Conf.* VI. xi (18). In the morning he had to teach, but during the rest of the day he also had to prepare his lectures, and pay respects to his influential friends, whose patronage he needed.

[108] *Conf.* VI. vii (11); VI. xiv (24); VI. xvi (26). They were living together in the same house.

[109] *Conf.* VI. xii (21). The expression comes from J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 375).

[110] There have been many suggestions about the inspiration for the kind of community Augustinus and his group of friends envisaged. P. Courcelle suspects Manichean influence, (but Augustinus had already abandoned this sect), or the Platonopolis of Porphyry (but *De Academicis* II. ii (4-5) shows that at the time of the project, he had not yet encountered (Neo-)Platonic philosophy) (P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin* (Paris: de Boccard, 1968), p. 179). C. Starnes and D. Simpson argue in favour of a more Epicurean inspired retreat, which seems the most likely. (C. Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion: A Guide to the*

everyone's resources into a shared deposit, so that sufficient assets would become available to allow every member of the group to retire. In this way, their greatly desired withdrawal from public life to establish a contemplative community could already become financially possible. The well thought-out plan failed to materialize, and was soon abandoned, so that Augustinus and his close friends had to fall back upon their earlier proposal to pursue their career for a few more years.[111]

### 4.2.2. "Private Conversion" to (Neo-)Platonism

Augustinus began assiduously studying in his limited spare time some translated books of (Neo-)Platonists,[112] a philosophy that was fashionable among the cultivated elite of Milan. It marked the end of his period of moderate scepticism, which had threatened to make the quest for Wisdom pointless, because of its claim that not truth, but only verisimilitudes, could ever be found.[113] He became enthralled by the new ideas of this sophisticated philosophy. A new important dimension of reality revealed itself before him, exemplified by the existence of a transcendental (immaterial) world.[114] Once again, Augustinus was profoundly impressed by a superior intellectual and social milieu.[115] Until then, he could only think of God in a material way.[116]

(Neo-)Platonism convinced him of the falsity of Manicheism. He realized now - to his own embarrassment - that his childhood religion could meet the scathing criticism he himself in the past had levelled against it. Bishop Ambrose used at times (Neo-)Platonic concepts to explain Christian doctrine before his cultivated Milanese audience. Perhaps he contributed indirectly towards Augustinus' discovery of (Neo-)Platonism,[117] even though the bishop had a more dismissive attitude towards pagan philosophy in general.[118]

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*Argument of Confessions I-IX* (Waterloo (Ontario): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), p. 167 n. 109; D. Simpson, 'Epicureanism in the *Confessiones* of St. Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 16 (1984), 39-48 (esp. p. 42).)

[111] In *De Academicis* (II. ii (4)) Augustinus gives as the only reason for the fiasco of this project, that they were not yet passionate enough about their search for Wisdom; only in *Confessiones* (VI. xiv (24) we learn that the project failed because of the *mulierculae* (literally, 'the little women/wives').

[112] *Conf.* VII. ix (13).

[113] Augustine will deal with this problem extensively in his dialogue *De Academicis.*

[114] It also admonished him to focus on his own inner world: '*By the (Neo-)Platonic books I was admonished to return into myself*' (*Conf.* VI. x (16)).

[115] This happened also when he went to study at Carthage.

[116] See for instance *Conf.* VII. i (1): '*The older I became, the more shameful it was that I retained so much vanity as to be unable to think any substance possible other than that which the eyes normally perceive*'.

[117] It would be normal that Augustinus, who was not interested in the Catholic faith at the time, would become very interested in the novel ideas he heard in Ambrose's sermons, without feeling obliged to pay attention to Ambrose's negative attitude towards pagan philosophy.

[118] The exact role Ambrose played in Augustinus' conversion to Christianity is hard to pin down. Augustinus recognizes his importance, but he seemed to have remained a distant, unapproachable figure, so that Augustinus was obliged to consult other people for his problems, notably the old priest Simplicianus. More striking perhaps is that Ambrose is credited in *Confessiones* only for making clear to Augustinus that, contrary to

Augustinus' discovery of this new philosophy and his success in achieving, however fleetingly, the (Neo-)Platonic ascent[119] - briefly tasting the vision and union with God (=Wisdom) - set him aflame to devote his life to the quest for Wisdom. He now eagerly wanted to break the worldly chains that kept him from enjoying a time of leisure devoted to the study of Wisdom.

> Quis me tunc honor, quae hominum pompa, quae inanis famae cupiditas, quod denique hujus mortalis vitae fomentum atque retinaculum commovebat?[120]
>
> *What title of honour, what retinue of men, what empty desire of renown, finally, what enticement binding one to this mortal life then had any effect on me?'*

### 4.2.3. The Pull of Christianity

After this stimulating period of intense exploration of (Neo-)Platonism, Augustinus turned to the Bible, more specifically, to the Pauline epistles to seek further guidance.[121] In *De Academicis* he states that he did so because the Bible was, after all, the sacred text of his childhood religion, and it enjoyed the greatest authority throughout the world.[122] He discovered that - unlike the Manichees – Paul did not contradict the ideas of the best philosophy available. The apostle also promised strength and stability to enjoy God more enduringly. At the time, Augustinus felt himself inexorably pulled down by his entanglements in worldly affairs,[123] which he held responsible for the transience of the (Neo-)Platonic vision.[124]

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what he had thought, Christians do not think that God has the corporal image of a man. He learned from the (Neo-)Platonic books that God was transcendental.

[119] *Conf.* VI. x (16).

[120] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (5).

[121] Notice the consistency of *De Academicis* and *Confessiones* in Augustinus moving from the pure (Neo-)Platonic writings to the writings of Paul: AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (5); '*Therefore, stumbling, hastening, yet with hesitation I seized the Apostle Paul... I read through all of it with the greatest attention and care*'; *Conf.* VII. xxi (27): '*With avid intensity I seized the sacred writings of your Spirit and especially the apostle Paul*'.

[122] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (5). Also *Conf.* (VI. xi (18): '*It is not for nothing, not empty of significance, that the high authority of the Christian faith is diffused throughout the world.*'), and *De utilitate credendi* (xiv (31): '*I see that I owe my faith to opinion and report widely spread and firmly established among the peoples and nations of the earth, and that these peoples everywhere observe the mysteries of the Catholic Church*') gives considerable weight to the *auctoritas* of the Bible throughout the world as an indication of its truth, and a justification for Augustinus to trust it.

[123] *Conf.* VIII. i (2).

[124] *Conf.* VII. xviii (24).

# 5. THE ABRUPT END OF AUGUSTINE'S WORLDLY CAREER

At the start of the Vintage Vacation (*vindemiales feriae*: mid September AD 386[125] - 15 October AD 386) Augustine[126] left Milan to enjoy a well-deserved break in a country villa at Cassiciacum together with his family, his best friend Alypius, and two of his pupils.[127] Near the end of this vacation he notified the people of Milan that he could not return to his position as professor of Rhetoric, because of health problems.[128] Already during the summer his lungs had weakened,[129] and the vacation apparently could not bring recovery. He also cancelled the engagement with his young aristocratic fiancée, and he already had dismissed his interim concubine. Those who did not know what exactly had been going on in his mind the weeks and months before must have felt sorry for him (and his family) to see a promising career so abruptly and prematurely ended by this tragic turn of events. *Fortuna* once again seemed to have blindly destroyed the dreams of an ambitious, talented man and his family.

At the beginning of March AD 387 - some five months after his resignation - Augustine had another surprise in store. He returned to the imperial capital and enrolled there as a *competens* of the Catholic Church, together with his son Adeodatus and his best friend Alypius, in order to start the preparations for baptism.[130] They were baptised on the Easter Vigil (the night of 24-25 April AD 387) in Ambrose's basilica.[131]

By this time Augustine already had completed a few Ciceronian-styled dialogues (the "Cassiciacum dialogues"), wherein he could explain what had happened to him, and what he was going to do, now that his career had ended.[132] Even his closest friends must have been astonished at his dramatic reorientation in life.

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[125] The traditional date for the *vindemialis feriae* is set at 23 August – 15 October for the year AD 386, but probably, the vintage vacation started later in the North of Italy (no doubt, because of the difference in climate). This inevitably brings the date of Augustinus' conversion to late August rather than the beginning of August.

[126] I use here the name Augustine instead of Augustinus, because his conversion in the garden of Milan was the real beginning of a reborn "Augustinus", and not so much his baptism, or his ordination.

[127] In all probability the present Cassago Brianza (30 to 40 km northwest of Milan) (J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 81); see map in *Appendix A*.

[128] *Conf.* IX. v (13).

[129] *Conf.* IX. ii (4).

[130] These preparations began at the beginning of Lent (10th of March AD 387).

[131] *Conf.* IX. vi (14).

[132] *Conf.* IX. iv (7). These dialogues will form the subject matter of the next chapter.

# CHAPTER II

# THE CASSICIACUM DIALOGUES:

# THE PURSUIT OF A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY DURING A TRADITIONAL *OTIUM HONESTUM*

## 1. LIFE AND COMMUNITY AT CASSICIACUM

### 1.1. An Ill-sorted, Modest Group

The group of nine leaving for Cassiciacum came nowhere near the select group of around ten cultivated friends who had tried to set up a philosophical community earlier in the year. Augustine and Alypius were the only surviving members, their close friend Nebridius, and Romanianus (Augustine's patron) the most conspicuous absentees. The rest of the party almost inevitably consisted of Augustine's family dependants: Monnica (his mother), Navigius (his brother), Adeodatus (his son), and two uncultured nephews (Lartidianus and Rusticus). There were also two of his students present: Licentius (the son of Romanianus), and Trygetius (also originally from Thagaste).[1] The attendance of these last two should be regarded as the result of Augustine's financial difficulties caused by his premature retirement, and his subsequent failure to involve wealthier members of his circle into the new project. Augustine was compelled to do some private teaching in order to fund his retreat and to support his many dependants. Considerable time was given to discuss Virgil's

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[1] According to A. Mandouze (referred to by J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 381), the original group of friends was very similar to the Cassiciacum party, including Augustine's two uncultivated cousins and the two students Trygetius and Licentius. However, apart from Augustinus and Alypius, there seemed to have been no other person at Cassiciacum who had been previously interested in philosophy. The contributions made by Augustine's brother Navigius and the two cousins at Cassiciacum are negligible. Further, A. Mandouze seems to confuse the notion of friends with dependents. It would be odd that Augustine's dependants would have been regarded as full participants, while none of the other members' family dependants would have been included. Exactly Augustine's allowance for including less cultivated people (such as his mother) within his conversations at Cassiciacum marks a vital break with the previous refined project: there is an alternative way to reach the truth, namely belief in the Christian divinity.

*Aeneid*[2] and poetry[3], and this considerably reduced the time available for contemplation. Further, although Verecundus offered them his country villa to stay in, they were expected to perform some labour at the estate.[4] G. Bonner candidly writes: 'Men do not get up early to work in the fields simply to lend verisimilitude to an idyllic rural existence'.[5] Needless to say, also their help in running the estate encroached on their time available for philosophical inquiry.

## 1.2. Fruits of Philosophical Leisure: The Cassiciacum Dialogues

Augustine tried to make the best of this far from ideal situation. He was keen to make his two private pupils interested in philosophy, making them read Cicero's *Hortensius*, the book that had aroused in him a passion for the study of Wisdom so many years ago. He clearly hoped it would have the same effect on them. During the month of November AD 386, he held, on top of their daily instruction in traditional literature, a series of tutorials on major philosophical topics. Out of these discussions, which were recorded by a *notarius*, three of the four so-called Cassiciacum dialogues were fashioned: *De Academicis* (or *Contra Academicos*)[6] (three books), *De beata vita* (one book), and *De ordine* (two books). The fourth treatise, *Soliloquia* (two books), was the result of Augustine's personal ruminations, usually late at night, and presented in the form of an inner dialogue between himself and (his) Reason.

## 1.3. Augustine's Religious Activities at Cassiciacum

Augustine presumably stayed at Cassiciacum from mid September AD 386 until the beginning of March AD 387. At the start of Lent (10 March), he had to be back in Milan to start his formal preparation for baptism as one of the *competentes*. The three "real" dialogues written at Cassiciacum thus only tell us what happened during the month of November. One should not forget that, meanwhile, Augustine wished to prepare himself for baptism.

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[2] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. viii (26); *De Academicis* I. v (15); II. iv (10); III. i (1).
[3] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. iii (7); III. i (1); *De ordine* I. iii (8); I. vii (20).
[4] *Conf.* IX. iii (5); AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. v (15); II. iv (10); III. ii (2).
[5] G. Bonner 1986, p. 93; D.E. Trout (1988, p. 137 & n. 39 on p. 145) on the contrary considers farm work 'another traditional element of the *vita rustica*'. However, Augustine complained that so much time had to be spent on other activities than philosophy (AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* III. 2 (2)).
[6] Augustine gives both titles in his *Retractationes*. While *Contra Academicos* has been in the past its usual title, nowadays there is a preference for *De Academicis*, which I have adopted. This double title well reflects the ambiguous feelings Augustine had towards these philosophers because of his extraordinary theory that the Academics themselves did not really believe their doctrine, but that they actually were crypto-Platonists.

*Confessiones*, which does not concern itself too much with the dialogues, offers a complementary view on his half-year stay in the countryside. He had already asked Ambrose around mid October AD 387 what he should read in order to become more fitting to receive baptism.[7] During his retreat, he spent some considerable time meditating on the *Psalms*.[8] He regularly prayed,[9] and with the help of God, he tried to rid his mind of false ideas, going through a time of critical self-assessment and self-purgation. His extraordinary reading of the fourth psalm as it was rendered in *Confessiones*, was mainly directed at the error of the Manichees. Perhaps this was not merely the result of his therapeutic exercise of self-purgation, wherein he regretted his former fascination with this sect.[10] Several of his friends probably did not wish to follow Augustine's example at the time, because they were still influenced by Manicheism, which made them contemn the authority of the Catholic faith.[11] Augustine surely must have felt angry about this particular obstacle, which deprived him of the companionship of several of his dearest friends.

# 2. THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF *FORTUNA* IN AUGUSTINE'S PROSELYTISING ACTIONS

## 2.1. Historicity of the Dialogues and Augustine's Sincere Commitment to Christianity

The Cassiciacum dialogues offer us a unique insight into a certain period during the half-year stay of the ill-sorted group in the countryside. They are extremely valuable to the

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[7] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* IX. v (13). Ambrose advised him to read *Isaiah*, but Augustine thought it too difficult to understand. He obviously thought it more beneficial to read the *Psalms*. A possible explanation why Augustine waited until mid October to notify Ambrose of his intention to be baptized, is that he wished to keep also this plan secret until he had formally resigned from his teaching post. It should therefore not be regarded that he remained doubtful about his decision. Again, the fact that he only resigned at the end (and not the beginning) of the Vintage Vacation makes sense, because he was using his ill health as excuse. It would only be normal (pretending) to wait and see if the vacation could bring recovery from his health problems. It is therefore not necessary to consider the *vindemiales feriae* as a test of resolve wherein Augustine still had at his disposal an 'unburnt bridge, and the possibility of going back' (words from J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 81).

[8] However, as J.J. O'Donnell points out (1992, III, p. 95), in *De ordine* I. viii (22-23), Licentius is singing *Psalm* 79:8 (on the toilet), no doubt because recently it had been sung regularly, so that the tune got stuck in his mind.

[9] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. viii (22).

[10] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. iii (9).

[11] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* IX. iv (8): *'What vehement and bitter anger I felt against the Manichees! But then my pity for them returned because they were ignorant of your remedies, the sacraments. They were madly hostile to the antidote which could have cured them'*. AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* IX. iv (11): *'As I read, I was set on fire, but I did not discover what to do for the deaf and the blind of whom I had been one, when I was a plague, a bitter and blind critic barking at the scriptures [...] Because of the enemies of these scriptures, I was 'sick with disgust'* (*Psalm* 138: 21).

present study.[12] Augustine found himself in a transitional period, already anticipating baptism, while still being merely a catechumen within the Catholic Church.[13] *Confessiones* and *Retractationes* both express regret about the traditional literary style of the dialogues, but testify that they were written in God's service.[14] Their content has caused a lot of controversy in the past. Within this study a somewhat extreme position will be taken on two important issues.

### 2.1.1. Historicity

The historicity of the dialogues has been highly contested. J.J. O'Meara defends their overall fictional character.[15] G. Madec upholds the truthfulness of the dialogues, and convincingly counters the arguments of J.J. O'Meara.[16] There seems to have come into existence a *modus vivendi*, which acknowledges that these dialogues were only loosely based on records of actual discussions held, and that Augustine had freely adapted them to suit his own purpose.[17] P. Cary, for instance, thinks that Augustine invented the overarching plotline of the dialogues.[18]

In this study the historicity of the dialogues will be almost unreservedly accepted, for the following reasons. One has to consider the great amount of control Augustine already must have exercised during the actual philosophical sessions held at Cassiciacum. He clearly held a monopoly position as the undisputed leader and teacher of the group.[19] The conversations should therefore be looked upon as tutorials rather than discussions. Even Alypius was still in awe of his former professor of Rhetoric, who appeared to be the only

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[12] One too easily assumes that Augustine spent the remainder of his stay at Cassiciacum in editing these works. J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 104) is rightly more careful: 'If the dialogues we have are the fruit of extensive literary revision, that would be the time for them'. Instead of attributing to the dialogues such great importance for his stay at Cassiciacum, one should rather allow for much more time being devoted by Augustine to other activities, such as prayer, contemplation, (self-)purgation of erroneous ideas, and study.

[13] He will stress this in the preface of *Retractationes*.

[14] *Confessiones* IX. iv (7); *Retractationes*, praefatio.

[15] J.J. O'Meara, *Saint Augustine: Against the Academics* (Westminster: Newman, 1950), pp. 23-32; J.J. O'Meara, 'The Historicity of the Early Dialogues of Saint Augustine', *Vigiliae christianae* 5 (1951), 150-178.

[16] G. Madec, 'L'historicité des dialogues de Cassiciacum', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 32 (1986), 207-231, written at the hundred year anniversary of the controversy.

[17] A.J. Curley (1996) very carefully states: 'We are probably safe in assuming that the general gist of the dialogues is genuinely presented in Augustine's literary creations'. Therese Fuhrer (1997, p. 19) gives also a balanced view: 'Die Cassiciacum-Dialoge können also weder als historiografisch genaue Tatsachenberichte noch als szenisch ausgestaltete Diskussionsprotokolle verstanden werden, sondern sind philosophische Traktate in der traditionellen Form des literarischen Dialogs'.

[18] P. Cary, 'What Licentius Learned: A Narrative Reading of the Cassiciacum Dialogues', *Augustinian Studies* 29:1 (1998), 141-163 (p. 142).

[19] E. Kevane, 'Christian Philosophy: The Intellectual Side of Augustine's Conversion', *Augustinian Studies* 17 (1986), 47-84, (p. 51): 'Augustine is the animating spirit, the guiding light, the master teacher'.

real expert in philosophical matters.[20] Because of his authoritative position, Augustine could direct and mould the conversations to his liking as they went along, so that it became less necessary for him to manipulate or invent facts, or even whole episodes, during the editorial process.

Secondly, Augustine had not the immediate intention to publish his treatises before a broad public. Above all, he wished to distribute them among his small circle of friends, although he recognized that they probably would reach a wider audience.[21] One of the primary aims of the dialogues was to inform his friends what kind of life he was leading at Cassiciacum, with the intention of persuading them to join him. It would be odd if he deliberately invented certain episodes when he wished to show what he was actually doing there.[22]

Thirdly, Augustine had left behind "schola illa" when he resigned from his post, rejecting its underlying traditional ideology. He very much lamented the deception and lies inherent in Roman education. In *Confessiones*, he described his profession as a "seat of mendacity",[23] while his former students gave themselves over to *'frenzied lies and lawcourt squabbles'*.[24] At Cassiciacum he pursued a new kind of teaching in "schola nostra", rooted within Christian ideology, where different standards prevailed. In this school, there was no room for deliberate lies and deception.[25] It seems inconceivable that Augustine would have no qualms about adding fiction to the dialogues, while he avowed their historicity so persistently within the dialogues.[26] He mentioned on several occasions the *notarius*, insisting sometimes that something should be put on the record. If he claimed something happened, while these things were actually invented afterwards, Augustine consciously would have sinned against the new high standards he so recently had imposed upon himself. It would

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[20] Augustine even had to explain the teaching of the Academics to him, while Alypius was supposed to defend their position.

[21] D. E. Trout 1988, p. 136, and n. 29 (p. 144): 'That they were quickly circulated is proven by *Ep.* 1 to Hermogenianus and *Ep.* 3 to Nebridius; In *Retractationes*, Augustine states that he will evaluate also the Cassiciacum dialogues, because they, too, have been circulating to a broad public, which seems to suggest that it had not been his initial aim when writing these works. See also AUGUSTINE, *De ordine*, I. x. (30): 'Ut enim solis amicis et familiaribus nostris litterae istae innotescant, non parum desudabimus' ('*But we [i.e. Licentius and Tryetius] shall take great pains that these records become known only to our friends and close acquaintances*'.

[22] Augustine had kept his plans secret, so that his wider circle of friends had been unaware of his conversion and his drastic reorientation in life (*Conf.* IX. ii (2)).

[23] AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* IX. ii (4).

[24] AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* IX. ii (2).

[25] In *De ordine* Augustine at a certain moment bursts into tears, because of the "misbehaviour" of Licentius and Trygetius, which reminds him of the mentality of *schola illa.*

[26] This is also the line taken by M.P. Foley, 'Cicero, Augustine, and the Philosophical Roots of the Cassiciacum Dialogues', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 45 (1999), 51-77 (p. 67), who talks in a comparable context about Augustine's 'adamant refusal to lie about even the smallest details', while 'Augustine goes out of his way to stress their [i.e. the dialogues'] historical accuracy, a marked departure from Cicero's unapologetic licenses'.

indeed be very odd if the first works he wrote in service of God[27] would be full of the kind of deception he so vehemently condemned.

Finally, and this ties in with his former profession, Augustine was a literary genius. He could make use of all his rhetorical skills to mould the raw material of the records into a literary composition suiting his purpose, without having to strain the truth of what happened. The process of selection and compression alone can significantly colour the account of the conversations, without having to rely on fiction. The lengthy introductions, and the many personal reflections and comments which Augustine added to the basic transcript, were additional means to leave his own mark on the treatises.

### 2.1.2. Christian Allegiance versus (Neo-)Platonism

The dialogues have been used in the past as evidence that in late AD 386, Augustine was actually converted to (Neo-)Platonism and not to Christianity. The controversy has now ended, and it is generally agreed upon that Augustine did not lie in *Confessiones* about his conversion in the garden of his residence in Milan, and the fact that at Cassiciacum he was already serving God. However, to acknowledge that Augustine was a Christian and not a (Neo-)Platonist at the time, or that he pursued a Christian philosophy, still leaves open many gradations of commitment to this religion. Alypius experienced at the beginning only a limited conversion to the Catholic faith, and was reluctant to be baptised.[28] In the dialogues Augustine was keen to make clear that he himself had fully converted to Christianity, and that he was not just someone who adhered to a (Neo-)Platonism tinged with Christianity. In other words, the dialogues announced to their audience that he now stood firmly within the Christian camp, and that baptism was a logical and inevitable consequence of his new commitment. Baptism into the Catholic Church was therefore as essential to Augustine's new life as was the study of (Christian) Wisdom.

He tried to convince his friends - among them still Alypius - to fully embrace Christianity, and to let go of their traditional beliefs. To say it with his later terminology, he encouraged them to pass from citizenship of *civitas terrena* to that of *civitas Dei.* Baptism proved to be the vital ritual passport to claim this new citizenship. It demonstrated that one was prepared to humble oneself before the cross of Christ, in order to be reborn, and to enrol as His soldier.

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[27] AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* IX. iv (7).
[28] See *Appendix* G.

In late August AD 386, Augustine unreservedly surrendered to Christ, unlike Alypius, who only experienced a partial conversion. This fundamental reorientation affected his whole horizon, morally and intellectually, leaving many friends astounded regarding the profundity of his conversion to his mother's religion, the Catholic faith. The Cassiciacum dialogues focus on the crucial difference between someone who believed he was sympathetic towards the Catholic faith, while still following principles of traditional ideology, and someone who fully embraced the Catholic faith and wished to build his life on Christ. Augustine did not endorse the grafting of Christian tenets upon Roman tradition, because in his eyes they remained two radically different ideologies: either you followed the creed of the Catholic Church, or else, you chose to comply with the (conceited) principles of traditional Rome. What remained uncertain to him was the outward form his projected Christian contemplative life was going to assume. This partly depended on how successful he was going to be in converting his friends to his way of life.

## 2.2. Augustine's Resourceful Proselytising Actions

We know hardly anything about how Augustine tried to win over Verecundus or Nebridius to his unique form of a Christian contemplative life. *Confessiones*, regrettably, does not dwell on this.[29] At Cassiciacum, he still had not given up hope that he could persuade some of his friends to join him in this new way of life.

Composing his dialogues provided Augustine with an additional channel to convince his cultivated friends to join his unique Christian counterpart to the traditional philosophical life. The implied Christian dimension of his retreat made this task particularly difficult. G. Bonner notices that Augustine was 'concerned in the dialogues to woo the reader to Christianity, rather than to overwhelm him with exhortations'.[30] Augustine knew how sensitive the issue of submission to the Catholic faith was amongst his cultured friends, so that a soft approach was required. While he innocently exhorted his readers to a traditional life of philosophy, he simultaneously tried, almost by stealth, to convert them to Christianity, since Christ stood at the centre of his philosophical life.[31] Much of the controversy about the dialogues could have been avoided if sufficient importance had been attached to the particular audience he was addressing. Augustine did not write a treatise dedicated to Ambrose or Simplicianus, but preferred to address his Manichean friend

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[29] See *Appendix* H for a discussion of Augustine's attempts to persuade Verecundus and Nebridius.
[30] G. Bonner, 'Augustine's "conversion": Historical Fact or Literary Device?', *Augustinus* 38 (1993), 103-119 (p. 116).
[31] G. Bonner (1993, p. 116): 'In the dialogues, true philosophy and Christianity are equated'.

Romanianus (*De Academicis*), his pagan friend Zenobius (*De ordine*), and the distinguished citizen and intellectual Manlius Theodorus (*De beata vita*). Only Theodorus was a *christianus*, and even he seemed more interested in pure (Neo-)Platonic thought than in Christianity. Also the main participants of the discussions at Cassiciacum were - with the exception of his mother Monnica - not as committed to Christianity as Augustine would have liked them to be.[32] It is therefore an undeniable sign of the sincerity of his conversion to Christianity that in crucial passages of his first compositions as a *christianus*, he wished to be explicit about his submission to the Catholic faith.[33]

Augustine realized that if he had pursued his career further and obtained greater honours and riches, he probably would have had it easier to persuade his friends.[34] In order to make his retreat more attractive to them, he presented his newly discovered life as a noble *otium liberale* or *otium honestum*.[35] On the face of it, his friends did not need to compromise their social standing. Augustine could also uphold the idea that his present stay was merely a more efficient realization of their previous philosophical project. He thereby obfuscated the fact that, actually, the nature of the project had profoundly changed.[36]

Later he would describe his retreat at Cassiciacum as an *otium vitae christianae*.[37] It shows his resourcefulness in adapting the vocabulary to his intended audience. It would have been counterproductive if in the dialogues Augustine had been inviting his cultivated friends to such an *otium vitae christianae*. As a Catholic bishop, he understandably no longer wished to present his first steps as a Christian in terms of a traditional *otium liberale* before a Christian audience. Both renderings nevertheless could be regarded acceptable descriptions of his stay at Cassiciacum.

Given that Augustine was convinced that the Catholic faith represented the only true philosophy,[38] whereby he came to acknowledge that Christ was (incarnated) wisdom, he could fall back on traditional terminology without constantly having to make explicit their Christian overtones. It made his controversial invitation less offensive to his cultivated

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[32] In the end, only Augustine, Alypius and Adeodatus sought to be baptized at the following Easter. Alypius' limited conversion has already been discussed. Especially in *De ordine*, Augustine attempted to convert Licentius to Christianity. This will be discussed later on.

[33] This will be demonstrated further on.

[34] AUGUSTINE, *Soliloquia* I. xi (18).

[35] D.E. Trout, 'Augustine at Cassiciacum: *Otium honestum* and the Social dimensions of Conversion', in *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988), 132-146, and R.J. Halliburton, 'The Inclination to Retirement: The Retreat of Cassicacum and the "Monastery" of Tagaste', in *Studia Patristica* vol. V.3 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962), pp. 329-340, are two articles dealing with the nature of the Cassiciacum stay in terms of traditional ideology.

[36] E. Kevane (1986, p. 50) considers Augustine 'a Catholic man who is doing his philosophical thinking within his newly discovered Catholic faith'.

[37] AUGUSTINE, *Retractationes* I, i 1.

[38] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* II. v (16).

friends.[39] It all formed part of his tactics to win over his friends by making his stay outwardly conform to a distinguished *otium honestum* devoted to philosophy, while at the same time he had humbly chosen to serve God. *'The books I wrote there [i.e. at Cassiciacum]'*, Augustine declares in *Confessiones, 'were indeed now written in Your service'*.[40]

His friends did not have to be fully converted to Christianity by reading the dialogues. It was enough if they could be made interested in joining Augustine, without feeling dismayed about the Christian dimension of the retreat. No doubt, Augustine would further rely on his remarkable talent in communicating his convictions to his friends, in order to bring about their full conversion to the Catholic faith. In the past, he also had managed to convert many of them to the Manichean religion with his exceptional verbal skills.

## 2.3. *De Academicis*: Traditional Make-up and Christian Content

*De Academicis* is one of the dialogues composed at the Cassiciacum retreat. This philosophical treatise was dedicated to his longstanding and wealthy patron Romanianus. It can be regarded as an elaborate effort to woo his close friend to a unique Christian version of leisured pursuit of wisdom.[41] The distinctive philosophical overtones of this dialogue can be easily explained. In the introduction to his book on *De Academicis*, A.J. Curley writes:

> Because it is a dialogue directed to someone not yet a Christian, and meant to bring him to an acceptance of Christianity, *De Academicis* uses language that would be familiar and acceptable to its intended audience.[42]

*De Academicis* has a traditional feel and the authority of Cicero stands very much in the limelight.[43] Nevertheless, Augustine interweaves also in this dialogue clear pointers to his

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[39] J.A. Mourant (1966, p. 84, n. 79) notices that in many other writings Augustine freely used the ambiguity of the term "philosophy" to his advantage, implying the meaning of the word in the traditional sense while sometimes also equating it with Christian wisdom and truth. R.J. O'Connell even perceives in the dialogues a deliberate coding technique which allowed Augustine to talk about Christianity in a concealed way, especially when it came to the crucial issue of the Incarnation (R.J. O'Connell, 'The Visage of Philosophy at Cassiciacum', *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 65-76).

[40] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* IX. iv (7): 'ibi quid egerim in litteris iam quidem servientibus tibi'. The reasons for his preference in the dialogues to present himself as a more traditional philosopher, rather than as the humbled Christian of *Confessiones*, need to be sought in the context wherein these books were written, and not so much in Augustine's inner conviction at the time.

[41] Seeing that even some of the participants were not yet willing to receive baptism, and in this sense, were still awaiting their conversion, one should also consider the actual discussions held at Cassiciacum as an attempt to win over this privileged audience to embrace Christianity.

[42] A.J. Curley 1996, p. 26. The difference in tone of the Cassiciacum dialogues and *Confessiones* could also be mainly explained by the difference in audience. See D. E. Trout 1988, p. 143 n. 11. *De beata vita*, addressed to *christianus* Manlius Theodorus, is, not surprisingly, more religious in character according to Augustine himself (AUGUSTINE, *De beata vita* i. (5)).

[43] The place to look for Ciceronian influence in the dialogues in general is of course H. Hagendahl's section on Cicero, and M. Testard's two-volume work *Saint Augustine et Cicéron*. Note also the fine article of M. P.

recent commitment to Christianity. The following three instances will demonstrate this. Firstly, although he had been fired on to philosophy by reading some books of the (Neo-)Platonists, he admitted that it was only when reading the Pauline epistles that the true face of philosophy was being revealed to him.[44] He thus rated Paul's writings higher than those of the philosophers,[45] making clear that in order to obtain the full measure of Wisdom, one needed to turn to the Scripture, and one should not solely rely on traditional philosophical books.

Next, he used a quotation from the words of Christ as one of the ultimate arguments against the Academic's thesis that truth could not be obtained. At the end of the introduction of book II he writes: '*Believe me, or rather, believe Him who says: 'Seek and you shall find''*.[46] He thereby indicated he accepted His authority in search for Wisdom. Finally, in the concluding monologue of *De Academicis*, which forms the climax of the work, Augustine declares that the authority of Christ, who is incarnated Truth and Wisdom, has primacy over his reason.[47] J.J. O'Meara states that 'the Incarnation is the point of the whole theme. [...] While some of the Platonists rejected Christ, Augustine accepts him'.[48] Christ became for Augustine the solid basis and the guaranteed path towards Wisdom.

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Foley, 'Cicero, Augustine, and the Philosophical Roots of the Cassiciacum Dialogues' (*Revue des études augustiniennes* 45 (1999), 51 –77): 'The hunt for Plotinus' or Porphyry's footprints has all but overshadowed Augustine's indebtedness to another thinker praised in those same pages as the saviour of Rome and the Latin father of philosophy: Marcus Tullius Cicero. [...] When it came to fashioning his own dialogues, Augustine followed the example of what had proved so effective on him. With their cover letters, choice of setting, and use of long concluding speeches, the Cassiciacum dialogues bear an unmistakably Ciceronian (as opposed to Platonic) character' (p. 51 & 62). Notice that with Augustine's startling contention in *De Academicis* that Cicero, and the Academics in general, were actually crypto-Platonists, he could to a considerable degree remain loyal to Cicero, while rejecting the sceptic position (AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* III. xvii. 37 - xix. 42). This must have been helpful in trying to persuade Romanianus. He, like many other cultivated noblemen, must have had great reverence for Cicero.

[44] It is not surprising that Augustine mentions specifically the apostle Paul, while in a similar context in the introduction of *De beata vita*, he talks more generally about '*the authority of those who have transmitted the divine mysteries*'. To African Manichees (such as Romanianus) Paul was regarded as 'the prophet of Mani *par excellence*' (P. Brown 2000, p. 97). It shows Augustine' sensitivity towards the person he was trying to convert wishing to present his case in the best possible way.

[45] In the introduction of *De beata vita* (i. (4)), Augustine states that he compared the writings of Plotinus with Scripture, so that he does not express the idea that the Christian truth was much more radiant than the (Neo-)Platonic truth. Most likely, the putting on a par of (Neo-)Platonism with Christianity was more in line with what Manlius Theodorus, the addressee, thought, since he synthesized both thoughts. It once again illustrates the flexibility of presenting the facts, depending on his reader.

[46] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. iii (9).

[47] Acknowledgement of the Incarnation can be considered the apotheosis in the other dialogues as well; see also AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* II. v (16).

[48] J.J. O'Meara, 'Neo-Platonism in the Conversion of St. Augustine', *Dominican Studies* 3 (1950), 331-343 (p. 339).

## 2.3.1 Three Potential hindrances to overcome

In *Soliloquia*, Augustine identified three obstacles, which could prevent his friends from joining: the persuasiveness of the Academic idea that truth can never be discovered, the thought that they already have found the truth, and their preoccupation with a worldly life.[49] This was no different in Romanianus' case.[50] Augustine imagines the Academic's view standing as a boulder before the entrance of his (Christian) haven of philosophy, because of its seemingly unassailable claim that truth could not be found.[51] With the discussion recorded in *De Academicis*, he hoped to do away with Romanianus' possible despair of ever discovering the truth. The second obstacle, the thought that he already had found the truth, refers to Romanianus' adherence to Manicheism. In *De Academicis* Augustine promises that he will deal with this issue in a separate work. A few years later (AD 390) he sent him *De vera religione*, which he again dedicated to Romanianus.[52] This outstanding treatise contains an

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[49] AUGUSTINE, *Soliloquia* I. vii (20):
*Ratio*: Sed quaro abs te, cur eos homines, quos diligis, vel vivere vel tecum vivere cupias?
*A.*: Ut animas nostras et deum simul concorditer inquiramus. Ita enim facile, cui priori contingit inventio, ceteros eo sine labore perducit.
*Ratio*: Quid, si nolunt haec illi quaerere?
*A.*: Persuadebo ut velint.
*Ratio*: Quid, si non possis, vel quod se invenisse iam vel quod ista non posse inveniri arbitrantur vel quod aliarum rerum curis et desiderio praepediuntur?
*A.* Habebo eos, et ipsi me, sicut possimus.
(*Reason: But why, I ask, do you wish your friends to live and to live with you?*
*Augustine: That with one mind we may together seek knowledge of our souls and God. For in this way, if one makes a discovery he can without trouble bring the others to see it.*
*Reason: But if they are unwilling to inquire?*
*Augustine: I shall persuade them to be willing.*
*Reason: But if you cannot persuade them, because they think they have discovered the truth already, or that it cannot be discovered, or are hindered by other cares and longings?*
*Augustine: We shall do the best we can.*)
It is difficult to make sense of the last Latin sentence. The reading *docebo* instead of *habebo* has been suggested, and then the translation would be: '*I will teach them, and they will teach me, as best we can*'; see G. Watson 1990, p. 53.

[50] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* III. xii (30). J.A. Mourant surmises that Romanianus, although he had followed Augustine in rejecting Manicheism, had adopted Academic scepticism and therefore refused to embrace Christianity (J.A. Mourant, 'Augustine and the Academics', *Recherches augustiniennes* 4 (1966), 67-96 (p. 85)). It seems, however, that Romanianus was still under the spell of Manicheism, while also being attracted to the Academics. Both have in common that they rejected accepting something to be true without proven by reason. In submitting to the yoke of Catholic faith, this is what Augustine could be criticised for. J.A. Mourant nevertheless rightly states that 'the refutation of the Academics is directed primarily to him [i.e. Romanianus] and the desire of Augustinus to convert him to Christianity' (p. 85).

[51] Another reason for insisting on Alypius' presence at the discussions might well have been that Alypius was still impressed by the arguments of the Academics (as Augustine had been for a while). He must have still looked upon Cicero as the authority *par excellence* on philosophical issues. If this is indeed the case, then Augustine wanted to use the debate of *De Academicis* to convert also Alypius intellectually to the Catholic faith, since this might still have been wanting (hence his disdain to include the name of Christ within these dialogues). What Augustine then sought to do in his lengthy monologue at the end of book III, was to replace the authority of Cicero, who had such a great impact on Alypius with the authority of Christ.

[52] It may well be that *De vera religione* was already written in substance at Cassiciacum, and that a few years elapsed before it was composed and published (*c.* AD 390) (A. Mandouze, *Saint Augustin: L'aventure de la raison et de la grâce* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1968), p. 492, n. 4.

elaborate defence of the Catholic faith based on rational argumentation.[53] Both works (*De Academicis* and *De vera religione*) tried to steer Romanianus towards Christianity.

The third obstacle mentioned in *Soliloquia*, the snare of (worldly) cares and longings, was specifically taken up in the first introductory epistle of *De Academicis*.[54] Worldly preoccupations also seemed to have kept Romanianus from joining their previous philosophical project.[55] In dealing with this particular issue, Augustine proposes a crucial changeover from Roman ideology to the Christian belief system via a renewed interpretation of *Fortuna*'s role in life.[56]

### 2.3.2. The Broken Traditional Balance between *Virtus* and *Fortuna*

In *De Academicis*, Augustine used no less than twenty-five times the word *Fortuna*. Their occurrences are mainly concentrated at the beginning of each of the three books.[57] In particular the opening paragraph of the work demands careful scrutiny, where he demonstrates his skilful handling of classical terminology within a Christian context. According to Therese Fuhrer this is one of the main reasons why this dialogue as a whole deserves considerable scholarly attention.[58] The first sentences of the introductory epistle in

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[53] See also the excellent article on this work by F. Van Fleteren, 'Augustine's *De vera religione*': A new Approach', *Augustinianum* 16 (1976), 475-497.

[54] One usually assumes that, although *De Academicis* was the first treatise Augustine started, the first published dialogue was *De beata vita*. This is true, but he first completely finished book I of *De Academics* and sent it already to Romanianus, thus in all likelihood before the publication of *De beata vita*. Afterwards he sent him the remaining books (II and III) of the treatise. This easily explains the existence of two lengthy introductions in the treatise (at the beginning of book I and book II). Augustine's comment at the end of book I is clear enough: '*And now, let us finish, as I said, this discussion, and, above all, Licentius, let us send a record of it to your father [ i.e. Romanianus]*'. The urgency of sending this first part in advance shows how much he wanted Romanianus to join the little community. Certainly, there were also great benefits for him if he managed to involve the extremely wealthy Romanianus in the project. Augustine's financial difficulties, which restricted his time available for contemplation at Cassiciacum, would have disappeared instantly. The financial viability of the project would thereby also be secured for the future.

[55] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. i (4).

[56] By highlighting in previous chapters Augustinus' earlier compliance with traditional ideology (even as a Manichee!), the Cassiciacum dialogues can therefore be regarded as the confirmation of his definite break with this kind of traditional life a few months earlier, namely at his conversion moment in a garden.

[57] Usually this is narrowed down to nine times, or even less, which are the places wherein Augustine unambiguously seems to refer to the "goddess" *Fortuna*. As stated in the beginning of this thesis, the net I am casting is much broader: with every mention of *Fortuna*, the reader himself has to decide what he will understand by this word.

[58] Therese Fuhrer 1997, pp. 2-3: 'Die Schrift *Contra Academicos* verdient die Aufmerksamkeit der Forschung somit in erster Linie als Zeugnis für die Auseinandersetzung eines christlichen Denkers mit den Thesen der heidnischen Philosophie und ganz allgemein für die Problematik der Integration von christlicher Lehre und traditionell-heidnischem Bildungsgut. Neben die – v.a. für die Theologie zentrale – Frage nach den Frühformen der Lehren des künftigen Bischofs von Hippo tritt damit die – v.a. für die literaturwissenschaften und die Philosophie relevante – Frage, wie Augustin an die pagane und christliche Literatur anknüpft und seine eigenen (christlich geprägten) Vorstellungen in der von der Tradition vorgegebenen Sprache, Stilistik, Terminologie und Form zum Ausdruck bringt und diese Tradition damit weiter entwickelt und weiter vermittelt.'

book I of *De Academicis* bring us immediately to the heart of Augustine's unusual understanding of *Fortuna*'s role in life:

> O utinam, Romaniane, hominem sibi aptum ita vicissim Virtus Fortunae repugnanti posset auferre, ut ab ea sibi auferri neminem patitur! jam tibi profecto injecisset manum, suique juris te esse proclamans, et in bonorum certissimorum possessionem traducens, ne prosperis quidem casibus servire permitteret. Sed quoniam ita comparatum est, sive pro meritis nostris, sive pro necessitate naturae, ut divinum animum mortalibus inhaerentem, nequaquam sapientiae portus accipiat, ubi neque adversante Fortunae flatu, neque secundante moveatur; nisi eo illum Fortuna ipsa, vel secunda, vel quasi adversa perducat.
>
> *I wish, Romanianus, that Virtus, who never allows Fortuna to take anyone away from her, could, for her part, snatch from Fortuna, resist as she might, the man that is suited to her purpose. If that could be, she [i.e. Virtus] certainly would already have placed her hands upon you. She would have proclaimed you her own by right; and putting you in possession of wealth that is truly secure, she would not suffer you to depend on chance, even if it favoured you. But the fact is that, whether because of our deserts or because of the exigency of nature, it is so appointed that the port of wisdom at no time permits the divine spirit to enter while it clings to mortal things, where the wind of Fortuna, favourable or unfavourable, cannot reach it, unless Fortuna herself, good or bad – but only seeming so – bring it towards that place.*

Augustine places *Virtus* and *Fortuna* next to each other in the text, which recalls the traditional tight link between these two opposing forces. He agrees that once a person belongs to *Virtus*, *Fortuna* can never snatch that person away from her. *Virtus* proves to be a reliable, solid stronghold, rendering man indifferent to *Fortuna*'s blows. This idea formed the basis of the Roman Stoic view on *virtus*, and Augustine seems here to comply with this tradition.[59] Neither does he at this stage seem to dispute the common belief that *virtus* is one's own. He rather wishes to focus on a particular aspect concerning *virtus*: how can someone begin to "belong to *Virtus*" in the first place? Augustine categorically states that *Virtus* cannot, on her own, snatch a person from the vicissitudes of *Fortuna*. Consequently, mankind remains in the clutches of this whimsical goddess until she herself makes it possible to break away from her bonds, and to arrive at 'the harbour of wisdom' (*portus sapientiae*), where one is at last immune against her actions.

According to Augustine, *Fortuna* has thus a crucial role to play in people's lives, because she can offer vital help to escape her dominance, making them able to learn to despise her alluring goods. In a way, she herself holds the key to liberate men from her clutches, so that the traditional power balance between *virtus* and *Fortuna* has now shifted in favour of the latter.

This extraordinary view on the relationship between *Fortuna* and *virtus* at the beginning of *De Academicis* has immense consequences for the way people ought to organize their lives. Augustine insists that *Fortuna*'s assistance is necessary to reach the harbour of wisdom.

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[59] See the discussion of *virtus* in the previous chapter on Sallust, and also the section on Seneca's 'Consolation for adversity' and 'The Stoic solution for the problem of theodicy'.

In the remainder of the first book of *De Academicis* - and more extensively in the treatise *De beata vita* - he defends the position that only the wise man can be called truly happy, since he lacks nothing. Consequently, since everybody wishes to be happy,[60] we all need the help of *Fortuna* in some way or other to obtain what we desire the most, namely happiness, which means possessing wisdom.

Such a view denies one of the basic traditional tenets, namely that man's *virtus* is in itself sufficient to lead a happy life. Augustine has thus a sombre view on man's capacities. He provides two possible reasons for this supposed inherent weakness in man: either we deserved it, or it is necessary by nature. Later, in *Retractationes*, he was displeased about this formulation, saying:

> quod autem loco dixi: ita comparatum est sive pro meritis nostris sive pro necessitate naturae, ut divinum animum mortalibus inhaerentem nequaquam philosophiae portus accipiat et cetera, aut nihil horum duorum dicendum fuit, quia etiam sic sensus posset esse integer, aut satis erat dicere pro meritis nostris, sicut verum est ex Adam tracta miseria, nec addere sive pro necessitate naturae, quando quidem naturae nostrae dura necessitas merito praecedentis iniquitatis exorta est.[61]
>
> *Moreover, either I should have entirely omitted two expressions I used in a certain place: "Because of our deserts or because of the exigency of nature, it is so appointed that the port of philosophy at no time permits the divine spirit to enter while it clings to mortal things," and so forth, for the meaning could be complete without those expressions or it would have sufficed to say, "because of our deserts," since it is true that misery was inherited from Adam, and not to add, "because of exigency of nature," for the dire exigency of our nature originated as a punishment for the first sin.*

### 2.3.3. Fortunate Adversity for Augustine

Augustine came to perceive *Fortuna*'s behaviour thus in a whole new light. His untraditional view is, as it were, a "Copernican revolution". What commonly is regarded to be "unfavourable *Fortuna*" has turned into a godsend. Augustine tells his own (conversion) story to substantiate his new interpretation of *Fortuna*. A sudden blow of *Fortuna*, i.e. his chest pains, has recently compelled him to give up his traditional pursuit of riches and honours. It has enabled him to break the chains that were keeping him from embarking upon his so much desired philosophical life:

> quae me ipsum capere moliebantur cotidie ista cantatem, nisi me pectoris dolor ventosam professionem abicere et in philosophiae gremium confugere coegisset.[62]
>
> *They [i.e. the gifts of the world] strove to ensnare me also while I was daily singing their praises, if the pain in my chest had not forced me to cast aside my empty profession and to flee to the bosom of philosophy.*

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[60] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. ii (5): "'Beati certe,' inquit Trygetius, "esse volumus'". This dictum is no doubt taken over from Cicero's *Hortensius* (fragment 36).

[61] AUGUSTINE, *Retractationes* I. i (2). Remarkably, Augustinus uses here *portus philosophiae*, instead of *portus sapientiae*. It is perhaps an indication how little difference he saw in these terms.

[62] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (3).

That Augustine is now considering his sudden chest pains to be a lucky stroke of *Fortuna* should not have come as a complete surprise to Romanianus. In the introduction of book II, Augustine reminds him that, before, he repeatedly confided to him

> nullam mihi videri prosperam Fortunam, nisi quae otium philosophandi daret, nullam beatam vitam, nisi qua in philosophia viveretur.[63]
>
> *that I did not consider anything to be favourable Fortuna save only that which would give leisure for philosophy, nor any way of life to be happy save only that wherein one lived, so to speak, in philosophy.*

The real problem which kept Augustine from embarking upon a leisured life was not so much his eagerness for worldly riches and honours - he had left this infatuation behind the moment he had read Cicero's *Hortensius* – but, above all, his financial responsibilities and obligations towards (family) dependants and friends.[64] They had high worldly expectations of him, and they depended on his success. His family had made considerable sacrifices to advance his career, and Augustine could not let them down, simply because he much rather wished to live a life of (learned) leisure. Romanianus' response had been in the past that if only he could free himself from his legal business, he would have helped Augustine financially, even to the point of sharing his patrimony with him:

> Tam sancto hujus vitae inflammatus ardore, ut te diceres, si tu ab illarum importunarum litium vinculis aliquo modo eximereris, omnia mea vincula etiam patrimonii tui mecum participatione rupturum.[65]
>
> *You [i.e. Romanianus] were so inflamed with such a worthy zeal for this way of life that you said that, if by some means you could only be free from the chains of those troublesome litigations, you would burst my fetters by sharing with me even your patrimony.*

As it happened, neither Romanianus' help, nor some unexpected great financial gain, but his sudden illness provided Augustine with an opportunity to break these chains, and to embark upon his so much desired "leisured life in philosophy". Circumstances beyond his control suddenly compelled him to resign from his teaching post, and to prematurely end his worldly career. In this way he escaped the pressure coming from his family dependants, friends, and members of the Milanese elite, to continue in his successful worldly career: nobody could reproach him for having resigned, if his poor health condition made it impossible for him to practice his profession any longer.

### 2.3.4. Romanianus' Lucky Misfortune

Romanianus was at the time staying in Milan, where he hoped to solve a legal dispute with a shrewd opponent at court. Augustine was keen to make use of his friend's current financial

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[63] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (4).
[64] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (4).
[65] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (4).

difficulties, since they could help Romanianus to turn his back ones and for all on public life, and to join him in his study of philosophy. Also this particular "blow of *Fortuna*" could prove to be a godsend fulfilling Romanianus' earlier expressed wish to be freed from his financial worries, and from his many worldly engagements, to embark on the noble pursuit of wisdom.[66]

In the first introduction (book I), he depicts Romanianus as a man who aims at receiving applause and praise of the common people by giving them bear hunts and other spectacles, someone who hopes bronze tablets and statues will be erected in his honour, and who wishes to obtain high-profile civic posts, because he believes that all this will render him happy.[67] Although Augustine confirms that an abundance of riches has come Romanianus' way from early on in life,[68] the picture he paints here is exaggerated, and inspired by the life of a notorious Roman figure, Sergius Orata. The latter also appears in Cicero's *Hortensius*,[69] and he forms the topic of a lengthy discussion in Augustine's *De beata vita*. In this dialogue he is described as someone constantly blessed by *Fortuna* ('*a prosperous outcome followed his every plan and desire*'[70]). He possessed vast worldly riches and many friends, and was very content in life. Because he seemed to lack nothing, he was considered to be a happy man. However, the group soon came to realize, at the suggestion of Augustine's mother, that Orata could never have been truly happy, because he still lacked one thing: wisdom, the greatest good of all.[71]

In judging Orata unhappy in *De beata vita*, even though he had *Fortuna* constantly smiling upon him, Augustine further adds weight to the idea that Romanianus' current adversity is actually a blessing in disguise. Unlike Orata, Romanianus can discover in this way the true nature of his worldly goods, and learn to value the possession of wisdom. Orata had the "misfortune" never to have experienced a setback in his worldly life.

Augustine thus moves away from the traditional concept of the happy life, which emphasised the task of active participation in public life, and which held out the reward of worldly glory and honour. Instead, Augustine advocates the possession of wisdom as the only good worthy of one's efforts, so that a leisured life devoted to the study of wisdom is commendable.

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[66] If Romanianus would succumb to Augustine's plea, also Augustine would benefit, because he then would have it easier to make his learned leisure financially feasible.
[67] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (2).
[68] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (1).
[69] Therese Fuhrer 1997, p. 70, n. 19; For the parallels (also in the description of Romanianus' adversary, see J. Doignon, 'La fortuna y el hombre afortunado: Dos temas parenéticos del prólogo del libro I Contra academicos, *Augustinus* 31 (1986), 79-85 (pp. 83-84).
[70] AUGUSTINE, *De beata vita* iv (26).
[71] AUGUSTINE, *De beata vita* iv (28).

After Augustine has painted an exaggerated picture of Romanianus' splendour, wherein nothing seemed to go wrong in his life, he continues:

> quisquam tibi persuadere posset non solum te felicem non esse sed eo maxime miserum, quo tibi minime videris? nunc vero quam te breviter admonendum tot et tanta quae pertulisti adversa fecerunt.[72]
>
> *Who could then persuade you that not only were you not happy, but that you were especially unhappy in not having the faintest realization that you were unhappy? But now, how quickly you have been made to realize this by the many great reverses that you have endured!*

Augustine thus contrasts the misleading happiness based on the unreliable possession of worldly goods, with that of true happiness depending on the sure possession of wisdom. He praises the merit of a life of philosophy to the detriment of the value of performing the traditional noble task of winning worldly glory through public (or civic) engagement.

Persuading Romanianus to prefer the search for wisdom to the pursuit of worldly goods was only one leg of Augustine's "Herculean task" to persuade Romanianus to join him. He also had to convince Romanianus that it was a Christian, not a traditional philosophy to which he was calling him. One of the ways he tried to achieve this was precisely via a new evaluation of *Fortuna*'s role in a man's life.

## 2.4. *Fortuna* as 'divinum auxilium christianum'

Of course, Augustine does not believe in the existence of a whimsical goddess *Fortuna*, who randomly showers riches and adversity upon mankind. He makes this clear in a passage of the first introductory epistle to Romanianus (book I),[73] following the argument that the help of *Fortuna* is needed to reach the *portus philosophiae*:

> nihil pro te nobis aliud quam vota restant, quibus ab ILLO cui haec curae sunt Deo, si possumus, impetremus ut te tibi reddat; ita enim facile reddet et nobis; sinatque mentem illam tuam, quae respirationem jamdiu parturit, aliquando in auras verae libertatis emergere.
>
> Etenim fortasse quae vulgo Fortuna nominatur, occulto quodam ordine regitur; nihilque aliud in rebus casum vocamus, nisi cujus ratio et causa secreta est: nihilque seu commodi seu incommodi commodi contingit in parte, quod non conveniat et congruat universo. Quam sententiam uberrimarum docrinarum oraculis editam, remotamque longissime ab intellectu profanorum, se demonstraturam veris amatoribus suis, ad quam te invito, philosophia pollicetur.
>
> *Accordingly, we can do nothing for you but pray, so that by our prayers we may win, if we can, the favour from THAT God who has a care of these things that He bring you back to your true self – and in doing so He will likewise bring you back to us – and allow your mind, which for so long has yearned for respite, to emerge at length into the fresh air of true freedom.*

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[72] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (2).
[73] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (1).

> *Indeed, it may be that what is commonly called "Fortuna" is governed by a secret order; and we call "chance" that element in things for which we can offer no cause or reason; and nothing is either helpful or harmful to the part which does not turn out to be helpful to, and fit in with, the whole. It is this thought, proposed in declarations of doctrines most fruitful and far removed from the understanding of the uninitiated, which the philosophy to which I call you promises to make clear to her true devotees.*

It is not really the goddess *Fortuna*, but another God, Who has the power to guide Romanianus to the *portus philosophiae*. Pure chance does not exist in this world, but everything fits into a hidden, universal order. Also Romanianus' setback has a place within this hidden order, and Augustine will soon reveal its true significance: the Christian God is calling Romanianus to abandon his worldly life and to join Augustine in his Christian haven of philosophy, where he can look for true happiness and his true self. Augustine believes, contrary to Romanianus, that the latter has been treated fairly in his current adversity:

> nam si divina providentia pertenditur usque ad nos, quod minime dubitandum est; mihi crede, sic te cum agi oportet ut agitur. [...] excepit te circumfluentia divitiarum, quae illam aetatem atque animum, [...] sequentem, inlecebrosis coeperat absorbere gurgitibus, nisi inde te Fortunae illi flatus, qui putantur adversi, eripuissent pene mergentem.[74]
>
> *If divine providence has a care for us – which we have no reason to doubt – then, believe me, you are treated as it is right that you should be treated [...] Riches were showered upon you from every side, and these riches had already begun to overwhelm your spirit and your youth in the tides of pleasure [...] It was then, just when you were on the point of sinking, that those winds of Fortuna which are commonly regarded as being adverse, snatched you away.*

Just like Augustine before, Romanianus is on his way to perdition, even though he is only doing what commonly was expected of a Roman nobleman, namely the pursuit of worldly goods, such as honours, glory and riches. Augustine has been saved from this false path to happiness by his ill-health, which forced him to give up this empty pursuit. According to Augustine, Romanianus is now receiving a wake-up call from the Christian God, Who is stretching out His hand through this apparent adversity, and helping Romanianus to exchange his false idea of happiness for the only true happy life in the *portus philosophiae*.

## 2.5. Christian Prayer to Seek Divine Aid

One of the crucial tasks Romanianus still has to do is to pray for further help from the Christian God. Augustine believes that his own prayers for his patron already have been heard, because of Romanianus' current "misfortune". In the introduction of book II, he again encourages Romanianus to pray:

> quam ob rem contra illos fluctus procellas que fortunae cum obnitendum remis qualiumcumque virtutum tum in primis divinum auxilium omni devotione atque pietate implorandum est, ut intentio constantissima bonorum studiorum teneat cursum suum,

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[74] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (1).

> a quo eam nullus casus excutiat, quominus illam philosophiae tutissimus iucundissimus que portus accipiat. haec prima tua causa est; hinc tibi metuo, hinc te cupio liberari, hinc, si modo dignus sim, qui impetrem, cotidianis votis auras tibi prosperas orare non cesso; oro autem ipsam summi dei virtutem atque sapientiam.[75]
>
> *While one should employ the oars of all available virtues in rowing against those waves and buffetings of Fortuna, one should especially implore with all devotion and piety the divine help so that the constant application of oneself to noble pursuits of the mind may hold its course, nor be put astray by any chance from reaching the safe and pleasant harbour of philosophy. This is your first task. I fear the danger involved mostly on your account. From it I want you to be freed. Nor do I cease to pray daily – would that I were worthy enough to be heard! – for favourable winds for you. And it is to the Virtus and Wisdom itself of the great God that I pray! For what else is He whom the mysteries present to us as the Son of God?*

Within this passage it becomes clear that, even if Romanianus has made up his mind to set sail to the haven of philosophy, he still has to implore divine aid: his *virtus* alone will not do to reach that haven. Augustine also discloses unambiguously which God he is addressing in his prayer: Christ, the Son of God, Who can be equated with *Virtus* and *Sapientia* of the Christian God.

Augustine remains confident that his prayers and efforts to persuade Romanianus will have their desired outcome:

> Ergone Augustinus de Romaniano frustra ista dixit? Non sinet ille cui me totum dedi, quem nunc recognoscere aliquantum coepi.[76]
>
> *Has Augustine said those things of Romanianus in vain? No, He to Whom I have given myself completely and Whom I now begin to know a little again, will not allow it!*

This insistence that Romanianus should pray to Christ, the Son of God, in order to obtain His vital help to reach the *portus philosophiae*, because his *virtus* alone will not do, is perhaps the clearest indication that Augustine has embraced Christian faith and has left behind traditional ideology, including (Neo-)Platonism. In both introductions of *De Academicis*, Augustine says he will pray for Romanianus to God for favourable breezes, because help is needed in directing him to the *portus sapientiae* [read: contemplative mode of Christianity]. He thus wants God to arrange the worldly events in such a way that Romanianus will be able to let go, not only of his worldly affairs, but also of the underlying traditional idea of the happy life, and to assist him on his course to the *portus philosophiae*.

J.A. Mourant rightly states: 'As a Christian, Augustine would hardly pray for Romanianus' conversion to (Neo-)Platonism rather than to Christianity'.[77] Even the prayer itself cannot be considered (Neo-)Platonic, because the mere idea that someone could pray for someone else's salvation seems alien to (Neo-)Platonic thought, which knows only a

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[75] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. i (1).
[76] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. i (2).
[77] J.A. Mourant, 'Emergence of a Christian Philosophy in the Dialogues of Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 69-88 (p. 71).

kind of personal contemplative prayer.[78] Nevertheless, prayer stands at the basis of Augustine's belief in God's care for mankind, which extends to each individual.[79] It is therefore Christian and has no place within (Neo-)Platonic contemplative thought. E. Kevane stresses the importance of prayer for Augustine, saying that 'prayer stands at the origin of Augustine's philosophy'.[80] No doubt, Monnica's incessant tearful prayers, through which she hoped to win her son for her religion, made Augustine particularly sensitive towards the efficacy of Christian prayer.[81] Asking Romanianus to believe in praying to Christ, and to pray for his salvation, is therefore a clear sign that in writing *De Academicis* Augustine seeks the conversion of his patron to the Catholic faith, and not "merely" to a traditional *otium honestum* devoted to philosophy.

Despite Plotinus' unconventional call to lead a contemplative life, he still stood by the traditional idea that one's own *virtus* was sufficient to obtain the happy life. The message of his (Neo-)Platonism has earlier in this study been described as "a gospel of self-reliance". It also has in common with traditional ideology its elitist character: only a few men of great intellectual faculty and moral superiority could reach the happy life, which entailed ascent towards, and union with, the One. Augustine is keen, especially in *De beata vita*, to involve in the philosophical discussions also his mother, and two uncultivated nephews. It illustrates that he has rejected the elitist and select character of traditional ideology, and that he instead has adopted the more egalitarian stance of Christian ideology: also his uneducated mother can philosophise. Her wisdom is not derived from any erudition, but from her faith in the Christian God. Although many (Neo-)Platonic aspects can be found in Augustine's understanding of the supernal order, he placed them in a frame alien to this philosophy. At Cassiciacum, philosophy was therefore already of a radically different nature from any of the traditional philosophies, even from (Neo-)Platonism.[82]

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[78] A. Solignac (*Les Confessions* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), pp. 76-77, cited from E. Kevane 1986, p. 75, n. 79) states: 'Ce climat de prière qui enveloppe les premiers écrits et se concentre dans les *Soliloquies* forme le premier trait du 'Christianisme' d'Augustin converti. Ce n'est pas de Plotin que vient cette priére [....] Pour Plotin en effet la priére ne rompt pas l'ordre naturel: elle est soit une mediation spécifique pour agir sur l'ordre universel, á la maniére d'une incantation magique qui met en jeu la sympathie du Tout, soit un processus de requeillement par lequel l'âme se met en rapport avec l'Intelligence et l'Un, mais sans demander aucune grâce'.

[79] Also the accompanying tears during Augustine's prayers were something unheard of within Plotinus' (Neo-)Platonism, who would condemn such an emotional disturbance of the contemplative process.See, for instance, AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. viii (22): 'ego illacrymans multa oravi'.

[80] E. Kevane 1986, p. 63.

[81] When Augustine gives a beautiful compliment to his mother by introducing here in *De beata vita* (i (6)) as follows: 'nostra mater, cuius meriti credo esse omne quod vivo', he must have had above all her adamant praying in mind, imploring that Augustine would one day become a baptized Christian. (AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones, passim*, for instance, VI. i (1): '*To You, fount of mercies, she redoubled her petitions and tears, begging that you would hasten your help and lighten my darknesses*'. See also AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* II. xx (52).

[82] His attitude towards the rich intellectual legacy of Roman ideology by which he felt entitled to take over those elements which could help him in his Christian discovery of Wisdom, he later justified by the parallel of the Biblical story of the Hebrews spoiling the Egyptians during their exodus. (see for instance AUGUSTINE,

## 2.6. The Danger of *superbia*

To bring about Romanianus' submission to the Catholic faith, Augustine thus wishes that Romanianus would accept his unusual interpretation of "chance" events. Romanianus' current adversity is not really a blow of *Fortuna* against which he should fight with his *virtus*. It is actually divine help to encourage him to radically alter his way of life. Romanianus is being asked to give in to *Fortuna*'s "vicious attack", and to retire from the turbulent sea of public life into an *otium honestum* devoted to (Christian) philosophy.

Insisting that divine assistance from the Christian God is necessary to reach the happy life is at the same time a request to become more humble, because it entails accepting that one cannot become happy through one's own resources. In this way Augustine hopes he can induce Romanianus to assume the appropriate meekness, necessary to willingly submit to Christ's authority, and to the Catholic faith. He realizes that even if he has successfully convinced Romanianus of the worth of philosophy, the greatest obstacle preventing him from accepting its Christian dimension, is his (traditional) pride. Recognizing the weakness of man's *virtus*, and realizing that divine help is necessary to obtain the happy life, is a way to overcome this most obdurate obstacle. In *De Academicis* Augustine portrays Romanianus as a typical member of the traditional Roman elite. Romanianus will have found it degrading having to submit so totally to the Catholic faith, because this runs counter to his aristocratic *dignitas*. Moreover, he still seems to favour Manicheism, which derides the Catholic faith. Traditional ideology, Manicheism, and (Neo-)Platonism alike, set great store on man's own (reasoning) capacities. Manichees maintain that there remains a (pure) divine element within man's soul, and that nothing should be accepted which cannot be demonstrated by one's own power of reason.

Augustine instead insisted that man's *virtus* was too weak and that divine help was crucial to obtain wisdom, and therefore to reach the happy life, which he identified as the perfect knowledge of God.[83] This can be regarded as a way to persuade Romanianus to become more humble, to break, as it were, his proud belief in self-reliance, and his traditional elitist frame of mind. Augustine thereby tried to rationally justify his call to

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*Confessiones* VII. ix (15); AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana* II. 1 (60): '*Any statements by those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, which happen to be true and consistent with our faith should not cause alarm, but be claimed for our own use, as it were from owners who have no right to them*'. (trans. by R.P.H. Green (trans., introd., and notes), *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 64.

[83] This is how he sums up the conclusion of *De beata vita* in his *Retractationes* I. ii: '*In this book, it was agreed by us who were making the investigation together that the happy life is nothing else than a perfect knowledge of God*'. See also *Confessiones* X. xxiii (33): 'Beata quippe vita est gaudium de veritate. Hoc est enim gaudium de te, qui veritas est' ('*The happy life is joy based on the truth. This is joy grounded in You, O God, who are the truth*').

submissively accept the authority (and vital help) of Christ, in order to become happy. In this way, one can also look upon the dialogues as Augustine's personal apologia. He is defending before an astounded circle of (Manichean) friends his humble submission to a faith he in the past so severely criticised.

Throughout his Christian life, Augustine would consider *superbia* to be the root of all sin (*Proverbs* 3: 34).[84] A text on *superbia* [Jas 4:6] appears at the beginning of two of his most important works: *Confessiones* and *De civitate Dei.*[85] In the latter, it is juxtaposed with a line of Virgil. In *De doctrina christiana* he indicates the importance of this passage: *'There is hardly a page in the Bible which does not proclaim the message: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'.*[86] The sin of *superbia* is applied to the pagans in general, the Manichees, the (Neo-)Platonists, and to heresies such as the Donatists and the Pelagians, who all refuse to accept, and submit to, the authority of the Catholic Church.

Therefore, in Augustine's eyes the sin of *superbia* stands at the root of people's refusal to submit to (the authority of) the Catholic faith. It has become for Augustine the criterion *par excellence* to differentiate Christianity from (Neo-)Platonic thought, seeing that intellectually, he was greatly indebted to (Neo-)Platonism. Augustine's reinterpretation of *Fortuna* plays a fundamental role in rejecting the highest intellectual achievement within traditional ideology: mankind is too weak to realize perfect wisdom without (active) divine aid. Those who refuse to submit to the Catholic faith, and continue to preach a gospel of self-reliance, Augustine considers proud men.

## 2.7. The *unus inmanissimus mons* of *De beata vita*

### 2.7.1. General meaning

In the introductory epistle of *De beata vita*, Augustine makes clear that *superbia* was for many cultivated men the crucial hurdle to accepting the Catholic faith. In his masterly evocation of people's journey towards the *portus philosophiae*, he identified three classes of sailors. All of them, someway or another, were confronted with *uno inmanissimo monte*, standing right

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[84] On Augustine's development of this idea, see J.F. Procopé, 'Initium omnis peccati superbia', in *Studia Patristica* 22 (Oxford 1987) (Leuven, 1989), pp. 315-320.

[85] W.M. Green convincinlgly argues that 'God resist the proud, but gives grace to the humble' is the basic theme of Augustine's *Confessions*, and one of the dominant factors in the development of his theology (W.M. Green, '*Initium omnis peccati superbia*: Augustine on Pride as the First Sin', *U.Cal.Publ. in Classsical Philology* 13. 13 (1949), 407-432 (p. 421).

[86] AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana* III. xxiii (33): 'Nulla enim fere pagina est sanctorum librorum, in qua non sonet quod deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam'.

before the haven, and making the entrance extremely narrow for those who wished to enter. Augustine warns about this mountain in the strongest terms:

> vehementissime formidandus cautissimeque vitandus est [...] nam quem montem alium vult intellegi ratio propinquantibus ad philosophiam ingressisue metuendum nisi superbum studium inanissimae gloriae?

There has been some disagreement about what this mountain exactly signifies. M.G.St.A. Jackson, who perceives a literary link with *De rerum natura* II, thinks 'it represents the mighty monolith of all secular philosophy'.[87] J. Doignon links the *mons* of *De beata vita* with the *moles* in *De Academicis*, wherein Augustine represented the sceptic position as a boulder standing in the way of philosophy. G. Pfligersdorffer thinks it refers above all to (Neo-)Platonism,[88] while Ruth A. Brown prefers worldly achievement in general, but mentions that it could single out (Neo-)Platonism in particular.[89] In his fine introduction of the Penguin translation of the City of God, J.J. O'Meara mentions this mountain, and sees in it a reference 'to certain Neoplatonists, who approached Christianity, helped others to become Christians, but rejected Christianity themselves'.[90] Elize Postma thinks *mons* to represent the general idea of (worldly) ambition, while he explicitly denies a strong link with (Neo-)Platonism.[91] L. F. Pizzolato usefully focuses on the radical difference between the mountain and the place where the true happy life resides, i.e. in the haven itself. It presents the crucial choice everyone has to make in the end when one is about to reach the *portus*: is one prepared to humbly accept the authority of Christ, and the Incarnation, "the Word made flesh", or not? Those who pass through the narrow entrance [i.e. humble themselves before Christ] will find the true happy life. Those who refuse to accept Christ, do this out of pride. They are leading a conceited life on the mountain of vainglory, which will lead them to their utter ruin.

The biblical echoes of some of the imagery used to describe the mountain support such an interpretation. The idea of a narrow entrance caused by the mountain reminds of Matthew 7: 13-14:

> *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

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[87] M.G.St.A. Jackson 1999, p. 74.

[88] G. Pfligersdorffer, 'Bemerkungen zu den Proömien von Augustins *Contra Academicos* I und *De beata vita*' in *Augustino Praeceptori: Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Augustins: zum 1600 Jahre Jubliaüm der Taufe Augustins* (Salzbrug: Abakus, 1987), pp. 33-58.

[89] Ruth A. Brown (trans., with an introduction and commentary), *S. Aureli Augustini De Beata vita* (Patristic Studies, 72), dissertation (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1944), p. 122.

[90] H. Bettenson (translation) & J.J. O'Meara (introduction), *St. Augustine: The City of God* (London: Penguin Books: 1984), p. xvii.

[91] Elize Postma, p. 227 (especially n. 2).

Also the idea of a mountain having nothing solid or substantial within, '*plunging down with a crackling of the ground-crust beneath*', can have been inspired by a few verses further on in Matthew (7: 24-29),[92] about the wise and foolish builder. The wise man built his house safely on the rock (= Christ), but the foolish one built it on sand, so that through the storms '*it fell with a great crash*'. Both biblical texts illustrate the radical difference between living a life in Christ or not. A further helpful approach mentioned by L.F. Pizzolato is to connect the meaning of this mountain with the addressee Theodorus, since he at least should understand what Augustine meant by this symbol. This is done, for example by J.J. O'Donnell, who sees in *superbum studium inanissimae* gloriae 'a hint of warning to Theodorus, against the temptations of worldly honours'.[93]

### 2.7.2. The "mountain of pride" on Augustine's journey

After presenting a general picture of the three classes of sailors arriving at the *portus philosophiae*, Augustine describes his own turbulent voyage, leaving it to Theodorus to decide which category he fits into. One therefore also expects to find some kind of hint in order to understand what *unus inmanissimus mons* stood for in his own life.[94]

It is usually assumed that Augustine belongs to the third category of sailors, whereby his sudden chest pains becomes the "fortunate" blow of *Fortuna*. However, M.G.St.A. Jackson is probably right in making a more cautious assessment: 'The third category is that in which Augustine puts himself, although *De beata vita* i (4) will reveal how he regards himself as summing up the other two categories also'.[95] Also J.J. O'Donnell perceives difficulties in placing Augustine straightforwardly in one of the three classes of sailors. He thinks it improbable that Augustine falls into the category of those who were lured to sea, and blown further by every blast of what seems prosperity until the winds of misfortune blow them back to shore (i.e. the second class of sailors). He comments that it is hard to see there what 'misfortune' Augustine could have in mind for himself, unless it were his health problems. The introduction of *De Academicis* sufficiently indicates that Augustine indeed considered his sudden ill-health to be the adverse blow of *Fortuna*, which in the end turned out to be his salvation.

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[92] A parallel text is in Luke 6: 47-49.
[93] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 420.
[94] It would indeed seem strange if Augustine would insist that every sailor met this mountain at the entrance of the haven of philosophy, and then make no reference to it when recounting his own journey.
[95] M.G.St.A. Jackson 1999, p. 73.

The main reason why it is not so clear-cut to which category Augustine belongs, needs to be sought in his attempt to produce a studied, carefully wrought introduction worthy of Theodorus, whose eloquence and learning he abundantly praises in this dialogue and elsewhere. The introduction presents an intellectual challenge to the erudite addressee (and the cultivated audience in general).

Taking all these observations into account, one of the greatest temptations both Theodorus and Augustine faced on their journey to philosophy, was an almost innate reluctance to humble themselves before Christ. To the Roman cultivated elite, (Neo-)Platonism presented an exquisite alternative to the unrefined Christian road to happiness. (Neo-)Platonism was a sophisticated, elitist philosophy, which distanced itself from the uncultivated populace. This attitude of intellectual superiority taps into basic principles of traditional ideology. The nobility of Late Antiquity, more than ever before, constituted the cultivated cream of Roman society. The Roman elite was traditionally also encouraged to pursue honours and glory, by which it could maintain and demonstrate its superior standing. A cultivated nobleman pursued a worldly career in which he secured public honours and worldly glory appropriate to his superior status, and could combine this with lengthy periods of leisure. Some devoted themselves in their private time to philosophy or literary study. In this way they could remain loyal to tradition and enjoy their privileged status in society. Not necessarily riches and honours in themselves therefore could lure men away from Augustine's Christian haven of repose. The honourable retired life of a prominent nobleman was a particularly attractive alternative for the Roman elite, which did not require humble submission to a faith opposed to Roman tradition, and thereby threatening their traditional place of honour within Roman society.

Augustine's postponement to entering the haven because of *nonnullorum hominum existimatio* can be linked with the appeal of the mountain of worldly aspirations, the *superbum studium inanissimae gloriae.* For a while, Augustine intended to become himself a respected Roman aristocrat, who soon would retire in a dignified way from public life. Then, he would devote his life to philosophical contemplation, and write intellectual, eloquent books, full of (Neo-)Platonic erudition, which probably would only marginally touch upon Christ, if at all. His sudden, violent conversion in the garden of Milan drastically altered his plans, as he totally submitted to the Catholic faith and the authority of Christ in his quest for wisdom.

Augustine's attitude towards (Neo-)Platonism remained uncomfortable throughout his life. His opinion about (Neo-)Platonists in *Confessiones* contains many echoes of the inhabitants of the *mons* in *De beata vita* blocking the entrance of (true) philosophy.

At the end of book VII he describes (Neo-)Platonists as people who *'from a wooden summit catch a glimpse of the homeland of peace and not find the way to it'*. Earlier on he has made the astonishing confession that he was pleased that he had come to know the books of the (Neo-)Platonists before he began being influenced by Scripture, because otherwise they *'perhaps would have snatched me away from the solid foundation of piety'*. He adds that, even if this would not have happened, and he would remain solid in his conviction of the Truth of Christianity, he *'might have supposed that the same ideas could be gained from those books by someone who had read only them'*. No other passage better describes the strong attraction (Neo-)Platonism exerted on Augustine, and, one can add, on other cultivated noblemen eager for wisdom. If Augustine found so many similarities of ideas between these two exponents of Truth, between Scripture and (Neo-)Platonic books, even more weight should be given to this one, crucial difference: Christianity accepts the inherent weakness of mankind and the need for divine aid, which comes through Christ, Who is incarnated Wisdom. (Neo-)Platonism, on the other hand, sticks to the classical idea that *virtus* is in itself sufficient to reach the happy life. Even the concept of theurgy within later (Neo-)Platonism left very much to the initiative of man, who could thereby control divine power. In Christianity, God was in control of his creation, and could not be compelled to do anything. Augustine's new interpretation of the working of *Fortuna* demonstrates the existence of (freely given) divine aid in the life of individuals, so that they would come to recognize their own human frailty.[96]

### 2.7.3. A likely response of the cultivated elite: Augustine's weakness

From a traditional point of view, cultivated pagan noblemen could simply argue that Augustine did not have the perseverance or self-discipline to realize his original intention when he wished to retire into a dignified leisure devoted to philosophy. He had the disadvantage that his humble station in life made it harder for him to seek first greater honours and riches before he could enjoy such a carefree dignified leisure. Instead, although his goal came within reach, he hastily (and too easily) turned to a Christian, more modest version of his philosophical ideal. In *Confessiones* Augustine will defend his submission to the Catholic faith in saying that during his (Neo-)Platonic investigation, he had difficulties purifying himself, and he was disappointed in the fleetingness of the ascent to the One. It is clear that (Neo-)Platonism on its own seemed unsatisfactory to him. His opponents could

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[96] Augustine will later denounce the Stoic view (which was also subscribed by (Neo-)Platonists) that 'My good is the *virtus* of my soul', and instead he supports the dictum of God's prophet, David: 'As for me, my true good is to cling to God' (Psalm 73, 28) (AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* X. 18).

argue that also here impatience, and too little self-discipline drove him to reject (Neo-)Platonism and to embrace a "naive" Catholic faith, which promised him Wisdom through revelation, and Christ's assistance towards the happy life. Also beneficial to Augustine was that within a Christian ideology, worldly honours, riches and titles (which he still lacked) are of no importance. From a traditional perspective Augustine did not yet belong to the cultivated elite, due to his lack of honours (and riches), but within the Christian faith modesty and poverty were highly regarded. By considering his own weakness an illustration of a universally flawed human condition, his frailty becomes less of an embarrassment: everybody is weak, and needs divine aid to reach the happy life, is his conclusion, and therefore, everybody should submit to Christ's authority. The greatest threat for Augustine's position came from people who still relied on their own strength, since it could lead to the idea that his submission to Christianity, and his total renunciation of self-reliance was not necessary after all, but merely a sign of personal weakness.

There are several links possible with the (Neo-)Platonists. There is the description of the wooden summit, as the habitat of the (Neo-)Platonists,[97] which recalls the mons superbia. Augustine admits in *Confessiones* that he might have been lured away by (Neo-)Platonic thought when already a Christian.[98]

When he describes the man from whom he received the books of the (Neo-)Platonist in *Confessiones* (VII. ix (13)) as '*a man puffed up with monstrous pride*',[99] one can only conclude that this man has to be a pagan (Neo-)Platonist who refused to bow before the authority of Christ and the Catholic Church, or, to follow Augustine's earlier allegory, an inhabitant of the mountain of vainglory.

There is also a link possible with a key passage dealing with the Incarnation in *De ordine* II.5 (16).[100]

> Quantum autem illud sit, quod hod etiam nostri generis corpus tantus propter nos Deus assumere atque agere dignatus est, quanto videtur vilius, tanto est, quanto videtur vilius, tanto est clementia plenius et a quadam ingeniosorum superbia longe lateque remotius.
>
> *Great indeed though it be that so great a God has for our sake deigned to take up and dwell in this body of our kind, yet the more lowly it appears, so much the more it is replete with clemency and the farther and wider remote from a certain characteristic pride of ingenious men.*

The 'a quadam ingeniosorum superbia' might well be interconnected with 'inmanissimus mons', the locus of 'superbum studium inanissimae gloriae'.

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[97] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* VII. xxi (27).
[98] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* VII. xx (26).
[99] AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* VII. ix (13).
[100] M.G.St.A. Jackson 1999, p. 77.

The idea to feather their nests and then to retire as cultivated noblemen in search for the truth was a dream Augustine and his friends seemed to have shared. Most of his friends even depended on Augustine's worldly successes to obtain some honours for themselves. In the end, Augustine radically broke with this plan when he decided to embark upon a Christian version of the philosophical life, before having secured the customary riches and honours to become a member of the traditional Roman elite, and to enjoy its privileges.

## 2.8. Augustine's Defence of his Modest Christian Version of *otium honestum* towards Manlius Theodorus

To conclude, Augustine partly warned Theodorus not to be lured away from his Christian commitment and to be deceived by the elitist attitude of proud men, who disdained Christianity. In this sense, one can wonder whether Manlius Theodorus was not kept from the vital sacrament of baptism because of his reluctance to openly and radically break with this elitist culture. Augustine might have been keen to introduce the picture of Sergius Orata in *De beata vita*, to uphold it to his addressee as a reminder that worldly honours and riches cannot provide happiness. Augustine seems (at the moment?) reassured that Theodorus had the correct attitude towards these goods:

> Fortunae vero sublimitatem multo minus. Apud te enim vere, quamvis sit magna, secunda est nam quibus dominatur, eosdem ipsos secundos facit.[101]
>
> *Much less I am frightened by the loftiness of your good fortune. For, although it is great, it is clearly secondary in your estimation because it makes prosperous the very ones whom it dominates.*

In *De ordine*, Theodorus is portrayed as 'vir et ingenio et eloquentia et ipsis insiginibus muneribusque Fortunae, et, quod ante omnia est, mente praesentissimus'.[102] He is one of the present day writers of a certain kind of philosophical books which Augustine describes as '*decked and gilded portals which can bring some men to the sacred inner courts of philosophy*'.[103] Augustine is fully aware of his lesser status, not so much because he lacks such riches and honours, but because he is writing in a humbler style. He expresses the hope that, concerning his writings, some men would not disregard the lowliness of the doorway, and proceed to enter.[104] Here again, there might be a concealed message implied to Theodorus, stressing that nobility, riches, honours (i.e. goods of *Fortuna*) and a grand style are not important for those Christians who wish to philosophise. This is also the reason why in this

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[101] AUGUSTINE, *De beata vita* i (6).
[102] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. xi (31).
[103] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. xi (31): 'per aureas depictasque januas ad sacrosancta philosophiae penetralia perdunctur'.
[104] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. xi (31).

dialogue, Augustine introduces not only his mother Monnica, but also his two uncultivated nephews, Lartidianus and Rusticus in the discussion group.[105] J.J. O'Donnell remarks that all three Cassiciacum dialogues are addressed to their recipients in terms that are 'both flattering and didactic/hortatory'.[106] He perceives the praise of Theodorus in *De ordine* to be

> at the best ambiguous, since it appears at the end of a paragraph of conventional disparagement of wealthy dilettantes, where the unavoidable suspicion arises that Theodorus is being praised as the best of a second-rate lot.[107]

By highlighting the radical difference between distinguished learned men who refuse to bow down before Christ and those who humbly take up the yoke of Christian faith, he indirectly challenges Theodorus to confirm and strengthen his adherence to Christianity, and certainly not to be tempted to join the people of the "inmanissimus mons". Up till then Theodorus most probably was still merely a catechumen, while Augustine already had his mind set on being baptised the following Easter. From a Christian perspective, Augustine was therefore "superior" to Theodorus, despite his lack of honours and riches, because of his "heroic" move to receive baptism and to modestly live in perfect chastity, giving up his chase for worldly honours and riches. Theodorus had a much more prominent status within Roman society, but this, Augustine actually downgrades in the dialogue, deeming it secondary. He insists that *Fortuna*'s goods should not be the objects of one's desire, because they cannot render true happiness, worse even: they might lure one away from the only place where true happiness is to be located.[108]

## 2.9. Conclusion

*Superbia* emerges as the fundamental obstacle preventing the cultivated elite from fully embracing Christian ideology. Augustine's particular interpretation of *Fortuna* became the principal argument in his call to renounce the conceited traditional ideology, and to replace it with self-effacing Christian principles. In presenting a bleak picture of man's own capacities - mankind needs divine aid to reach the happy life -, Augustine can justify his own controversial submission to the authority of the Catholic faith. He insisted he needed that blow of *Fortuna* in the form of his ill-health, finally to break loose from the allurements of a worldly life. Not accidentally did the pain emerge in his chest. Augustine later came to

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[105] Their role in this dialogue is minimal, but it can be no coincidence that *De beata vita* is the only dialogue in which they actually participate.
[106] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 420.
[107] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 420.
[108] Also concerning a wife, Augustine recognizes the danger of being lured away from philosophy, and becoming chained to worldly pleasures: '*I feel that there is nothing which strips the mind of a man of its defences so much as feminine blandishments and the physical contact which is the essence of living with a woman*' (AUGUSTINE, *Soliloquia* I. x (17)).

regard this part of the body as the symbolic resting-place of a man's pride.[109] The divine aid that Augustine needed did not come from the pagan goddess *Fortuna*. Her supposed actions he ascribed to the working of the Christian God's providence, who actively called His subjects towards Him. This interpretation of *Fortuna* as the helping hand of the Christian God was the crucial element in justifying his own submission to the Catholic faith and his renunciation of (Neo-)Platonism which refuses to do this, and instead preaches a gospel of self-reliance. Augustine's great admiration for this philosophy only enhanced the need to adopt his view on man's weakness in order to radically distinguish himself from them. Any voice proclaiming that man has it within himself to reach the happy life, undermined his justification to submit himself to the Catholic faith. Later in *Confessiones*, Augustine writes:

> *You cured me in the first place of my lust for self-justification to show yourself propitious to all my other iniquities. [...] By fear of you, you repressed my pride and by your yoke you made my neck submissive. [...] 'You resist the proud but give grace to the humble'. You 'thunder' upon the ambitions of the world, and 'the foundations of the hills tremble.*[110]

Augustine thereby also insisted that his own lack of honours and riches was not important, because it should not be coveted in the first place. It is not in having elite status in Roman society, nor in amassing worldly riches, that true happiness will come one's way.

## 3. AUGUSTINE'S UNORTHODOX VIEW OF *FORTUNA* AND *VIRTUS*

According to Augustine *Fortuna* should not be regarded as an opponent of man's *virtus* in his efforts to reach the happy life. Actually, it is the Christian God's helping hand, giving vital support to man's weak *virtus* so that he may find true happiness in the *portus* (*christianus*) *philosophiae*. This untraditional interpretation of *Fortuna* plays a crucial role in persuading other cultivated noblemen to humbly submit to the Catholic faith, for they still may hold on to the traditional belief that the happy life can be obtained through their own efforts. Even those of the intellectual elite who agree with Augustine that the true happy life consists in the possession of wisdom, can find this in (Neo-)Platonism. This pagan philosophy is more in line with their traditional ideology, while adherents do not have to submit to the yoke of the Catholic faith.

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[109] P. Brown (2000, p. 102), referring to AUGUSTINE, *De Genesi contra Manichaeorum* II. xvii (26).
[110] AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* X. xxxvi (59).

To press home his revolutionary view on *Fortuna* and *virtus*, Augustine uses his own life experience as illustration. He claims he could not have embarked upon his desired life of philosophy, if his sudden illness had not compelled him to let go of his worldly (and public) preoccupations. What seemed like a deplorable setback (failing health) has become a blessing in disguise. Likewise, Augustine is "pleased" with Romanianus' current legal difficulties and impending loss of wealth. This adversity, too, should be considered a welcome opportunity for his patron to finally free himself from his troublesome worldly preoccupations, and to steer towards the *portus philosophiae*, where the true happy life resides.

This significant difference in conception of *Fortuna* can best be appreciated when it is contrasted with the opinion of Cicero, the foremost Roman traditional *auctoritas* in philosophical matters.

## 3.1. Cicero: Man's *virtus* is in Itself Sufficient to Reach the Happy Life

The best traditional source with which to compare Augustine's view on *Fortuna* and *virtus*, comes from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*. Scholars readily acknowledge Augustine's overall dependence on this classical author for his Cassiciacum dialogues. The *Fortuna* imagery Augustine used in his introductions of *De Academicis* and *De beata vita*, was no doubt inspired by Cicero's introductions to books III and V of *Tusculan Disputations*, and to book III of *De Officiis*.[111]

In book V of *Tusculan Disputations*, also Cicero describes how he arrived at the *portus philosophiae*. The following paraphrase of the most relevant ideas in the introductory paragraphs of this book illustrates that Augustine wrote his introduction almost as a response to what Cicero had to say on the topic of *Fortuna* and *virtus*:

> *After all the varied blows of Fortuna it is hard to believe that in order to live happy the only thing needed is virtus. [...] If virtus was dependent on many unpredictable accidents, so that it was not able to maintain sufficient strength on its own account, then, in order to achieve a happy life, all we can do is to merely hope for the best and pray heaven that happiness might somehow come our way. [...] At a time like this, when Fortuna is harassing me so cruelly, I lose confidence and fear for the general weakness and frailty of mankind, thinking that nature has not given us sufficient strength.*

Cicero is aware of the difficulty of believing in the power of *virtus*, because its seems defeated by the terrible blows he has recently received from *Fortuna*. These setbacks

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[111] See for instance, M.P. Foley 1999, pp. 62-63; J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 88) for parallels between the literary representation of Cassiciacum and the *Tusculan Disputations* of Cicero'.

occurred both in public life, where the dictatorship of Caesar effectively put an end to the free *respublica*, and in private life, where the sudden death of his dearest daughter Tullia,[112] finally broke Cicero's spirit. Lactantius tells us about this terrible personal blow:

> M. Tullius in sua *Consolatione* pugnasse se semper contra Fortunam loquitur, eamque a se esse superatam, cum fortiter inimicorum impetus retudisset; ne tum quidem se ab ea fractam, cum domo pulsus patria caruit; tum autem, cum amiserit clarissimam filiam, victum se a Fortuna turpiter confitetur.[113]
>
> *Cicero says in his Consolation that he has always fought against Fortuna, and that she was always overpowered by him when he had valiantly beaten back the attack of his enemies; that he was not subdued by her even when he was driven from his home and deprived of his country; but then, when he lost his dearest daughter, he shamefully confesses that he is overcome by Fortuna.*[114]

Cicero confirms the traditional antagonism between *Fortuna* and *virtus*, but he is troubled about the apparent weakness of his *virtus* in its fight with *Fortuna*'s recent strong assaults on him. It even makes him doubt the traditional fundamental tenet that one's *virtus* is sufficient to reach the happy life. He recognizes that if this would not be the case, happiness becomes dependent on *Fortuna*, so that prayer is necessary in the hope that it will somehow come his way. Cicero realizes that such a bleak picture of man's capacities will discourage many from taking the virtuous road to (worldly) glory, even though *virtus* has made Rome so great.

Also in book III of *Tusculan Disputations* Cicero seems to share with Augustine a pessimistic view on human nature. Nevertheless, there remains an important difference between the two views. In *Tusculan Disputations* III, i (2), he admits that, regrettably, only the seeds of *virtus* are inborn in our dispositions. But, he goes on, if they are allowed to ripen, nature's own hand will lead man to happiness in life. This natural development is however hampered by environmental conditions. As soon as we are born, we at once find ourselves in a world of iniquity amid a medley of wrong beliefs, '*so that it seems as if we drank in deception with our nurse's milk*' ('ut paene cum lacte nutricis errorem suxisse videamur').[115] Further education brings further deceptions, whereby truth gives place to unreality.[116] Unlike Augustine, Cicero thus blames external circumstances for the misconception we have of the strength of *virtus*, and the role it plays in reaching the happy life. Far too easily does public

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[112] She died from the consequences of giving birth.

[113] LACTANTIUS, *Divine institutes* III. xxviii.

[114] Lactantius goes on to say that '*in many speeches men rail at the injustice of Fortuna, and in opposition to Fortuna arrogantly boast of their own virtues. These are nothing but the ravings of thoughtless levity*' (LACTANTIUS, *Divine institutes* III. xxviii).

[115] Notice that Augustine uses the same imagery in *Confessiones* to describe how he received the lifesaving truth during his early childhood: AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* III. iv (8): 'hoc nomen secundum misericordiam tuam, domine, hoc nomen salvatoris mei, filii tui, in ipso adhuc lacte matris tenerum cor meum pie biberat et alte retinebat' ('*This name [i.e. the name of Christ], by your mercy Lord, this name of my Saviour your Son, my infant heart had piously drunk in with my mother's milk, and at a deep level I retained the memory*'). Nevertheless, he would totally agree with Cicero's criticism of the deception he drank in from his schoolmasters and the traditional poets.

[116] CICERO, *Tusculan Disputations* III. i (2).

opinion lead men astray. We further tend to exaggerate our misfortunes and our own weaknesses by the behaviour of others.

In this way Cicero can safeguard man's own ability, blaming upbringing and society in general for his apparent faulty perception of *virtus'* strength.

> *I realize I am forming my opinion about the strength of virtus from the effeminacy of others, and perhaps my own. Virtus does really exist, and it is capable of rising above the accidents of human life. We tend to magnify the approach of all adversities by our fears, as well as their presence by our sorrow, and prefer to condemn the course of events rather than our own mistakes.*

Augustine, on the other hand, will put the blame completely on the inherent weakness of human nature, so that man's *virtus* is, as it were per definition, too weak to free itself from the domination of *Fortuna*, which is necessary to reach the happy life.

Cicero nevertheless realizes that he himself is responsible for a faulty perception and he has a self-remedy ready to cure this apparent weakness:

> Sed et huius culpae et ceterorum vitiorum peccatorumque nostrorum omnis a philosophia petenda correctio est; cuius in sinum cum a primis temporibus aetatis nostra voluntas studiumque nos compulisset, his gravissimis casibus in eundem portum, ex quo eramus egressi, magna iactati tempestate confugimus.
>
> *But the cure for this fault, and for all our other failings and offences is philosophy. From my earliest youth I threw myself into its arms: it was my own deliberate enthusiastic choice. And now again, in my present miseries, when I am tossed by all the fury of the tempest, I have sought refuge in the very same harbour from which I first set out to sea.*

No doubt Augustine had this passage in mind when presenting his own journey towards a life in philosophy. While both Cicero and Augustine seem to accept that philosophy is the medicine for man's soul, there remain some significant differences between their views. Cicero has his *otium philosophandi* enforced upon him, and he perceives it as the best substitute for his political life.[117] As soon as he has the opportunity to re-engage in public life, he will not hesitate to do so, because actively serving the respublica remains his highest aspiration. In *De republica* I. i. (1), for instance, Cicero criticises the Epicureans' lack of public duty and their anti-political irresponsibility, and upholds to them the example of Marcus Cato:

> certe licuit Tusculi se in otio delectare [...] sed homo demens ut isti putant, cum cogeret eum necessitas nulla, in his undis et tempestatibus ad summam senectutem maluit iactari, quam in illa tranquillitate atque otio iucundissime vivere.
>
> *He [i.e. Cato] might certainly have enjoyed his retirement at Tusculum [...] But that maniac, as those fellows [i.e.. Epicureans] call him, without being compelled by any necessity, chose to be buffeted by these stormy waves right into extreme old age, instead of enjoying the delightfully tranquil and easy life which they extol.*

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[117] 'It was in my books that I was speaking to the Senate and Assembly. I considered philosophy a substitute for political activity'. CICERO, *De divinatione* II. ii (7); quotation from Elizabeth Rawson 1983 (rev. edn.), p. 231.

This is why Cicero does not at all consider the dictatorship of Caesar and the loss of his daughter Tullia, to be "blessings in disguise" simply because they called him back to the *portus philosophiae*. These events remain in his eyes vicious acts of *Fortuna*, which have prevented him from fulfilling his public duties on the political scene. In his temporary retirement, he only wants to make the best of what is essentially a bad situation, and he uses his leisure to strengthen his (and other citizens') confidence in *virtus* and in the traditional ideology. The *portus philosophiae* becomes merely a temporary refuge for self-improvement to reinforce convictions passed on by tradition, and to regain mental strength. Cicero solely relies on his own (unaided) power of reasoning to search for wisdom. Philosophy becomes a self-therapy to strengthen one's mind after *Fortuna*'s assaults have seriously undermined and cast doubt on one of the fundamental principles of traditional ideology: that one's *virtus* ought to be strong enough to render the happy life. In the introduction of book III of *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero expresses his conviction that philosophy lies within one's own power:

> Est profecto animi medicina, philosophia, cuius auxilium non ut in corporis morbis petendum est foris, omnibusque opibus atque viribus, ut nosmet ipsi nobis mederi possimus, elaborandum est.[118]
>
> *Assuredly there is an art of healing the soul – I mean philosophy, whose aid must be sought not, as in bodily diseases, outside ourselves, and we must use our utmost endeavour, with all our resources and strength, to have the power to be ourselves our own physicians.*

Sallust, too, believes that adverse circumstances should not become an excuse for not following any longer the virtuous road towards (worldly) glory in service of the *respublica*. In a general reflection on mankind at the beginning of *Bellum Iugurthinum*, he criticises those who complain about their weak nature, and claims that they are dominated by chance, when they are not exercising their *virtus* in service of the *respublica*. He thinks that they themselves are to blame for their effeminate condition for having given themselves over to their base desires and worldly pleasures in private life, and for neglecting their back on their public duty. Like Cicero, Sallust strongly believes that nature has endowed man with sufficient strength: one does not need *Fortuna*. Only when people give themselves over to their base desires will they feel trapped in the power of *Fortuna*.

> Falso queritur de natura sua genus humanorum, quod imbecilla atque aevi brevis forte potius quam virtute regatur. [...] Qui ubi ad gloriam virtutis via grassatur, abunde pollens potensque et clarus est neque Fortuna eget, quippe quae probitatem, industriam aliasque artis bonas neque dare neque eripere cuiquam potest. Sin captus pravis cupidinibus ad inertiam et voluptates corporis pessum datus est, perniciosa libidine paulisper usus, ubi per socordiam vires tempus ingenium diffluxere, naturae infirmitas accusatur: suam quisque culpam auctores ad negotia transferunt. Quod si hominibus

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[118] CICERO, *Tusculan Disputatons* III. iv (7).

> bonarum rerum tanta cura esset, quanto studio aliena nihil profutura multaque etiam periculosa petunt, neque regerentur magis quam regerent casus...[119]
>
> *Mankind complains wrongly that their nature is feeble and short-lived, and ruled rather by chance than by virtus. [...] When it [= the soul] proceeds on the virtuous road to glory, it has all the resources and abilities and does not need Fortuna, since she of course cannot give any man uprightness, energy, and other good qualities, nor snatch them away. But if the soul is enslaved by base desires and sinks into corruption of sloth and carnal pleasures, it enjoys a ruinous indulgence for a short time; then when strength, time, and intelligence wasted away through laziness, the blame is put on the weakness of our nature, and each man excuses himself for his own shortcomings by imputing his failure to adverse circumstances (negotia). But if men pursued good things with the same ardour with which they seek what is unedifying and unprofitable – often, indeed, actually dangerous and pernicious – they would not rather be governed by chance (casus) than control chance.*

Augustine, however, takes the weakness of human nature for granted, and insists that everybody needs *Fortuna*'s help if one wants to "belong to *Virtus*" and reach the happy life.

Sallust's particular aim in this passage is to defend his choice to write history in his private life. He argues that is still exercising his *virtus* in service of the *respublica*, and he wants to distance himself from those noblemen, who waste themselves away in hunting and feasts without bothering with their traditional task to make their contribution to Roman society. Even though Sallust is currently barred from political life, he claims he has found an alternative way to exercise his *virtus* (*animi*) in service of Roman society even in private life: writing Roman history.

Cicero's eulogy on philosophy in *Hortensius*, too, was mainly aimed at justifying this unusual leisured activity before the Romans. He tries to present it as a worthy alternative to active participation in politics, at a time when this has become impossible to him. Like Sallust, he wished to show that even when one is prevented from playing an important role in public life, one still could exercise one's *virtus* in service of the *respublica* in private life.

Augustine profited from Cicero's praise of philosophy, which he takes out of its context. There was no doubt in Cicero's mind, that serving the *respublica* via an honourable public career remained the undisputed highest duty for a Roman nobleman. Only when this was made impossible by factors outside his control, did he look for alternative ways to serve his state. In his case, he turned to philosophy, while Sallust turned to historiography.

Augustine is pleased to have been forced into retreat, repudiating the contribution he was making towards the glory of the "*respublica*" as a professor of rhetoric and imperial orator. He much rather prefers his current *otium* which he devotes to philosophy. He has no intention to return again to public life: nothing seems able to persuade him to set out again at sea and to confront the buffetings of *Fortuna*. The main reason for his appraisal of *otium* as opposed to his traditional duty in public life, is that he has come to reject the established

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[119] SALLUST, *BeJu* I.1.

concept of the happy life, engendered by traditional ideology. He has become convinced that the traditional hunt for worldly glory, honours and riches will not render the true happy life, even though it may contribute to the running of the established Roman "*respublica*".

Augustine's appraisal of *otium* and his abandonment of his public task have an Epicurean trait in them. To avoid the buffetings and storms of *Fortuna* he decides to withdraw from public life, and instead he looks for happiness within a small, tranquil community of likeminded friends in the countryside. Augustine has no intention of picking up his previous role in society once he is recovered from his illness, or once his "philosophy" has strengthened his soul, to face the vicissitudes of *Fortuna* on the turbulent sea of public life. The *portus philosophiae* appears to be for him his final destination.

At the same time, he has come to believe that man's *virtus* is too weak to make real the happy life, and that therefore prayer is needed, not to *Fortuna*, but to the Christian God, so that He may come to the rescue. To be able to realise that the traditional concept of the happy life is false, to be able to cut oneself loose from worldly preoccupations, even to be able to obtain wisdom, all require divine assistance.[120] Augustine finds this crucial divine aid within Christ, Whom he believes is incarnated Wisdom and *Virtus* of God.

Whereas Cicero thinks that one's own intellectual capacities can set straight the false belief that *virtus* is not strong enough to lead the happy life, Augustine now claims that Cicero's fear was actually justified, and that man's *virtus* is inherently too weak. Man can therefore also not become his own doctor to overcome this weakness, but he needs to place himself into (the Christian) God's hands.

Augustine apparently shares with the Epicureans the view that the happy life is located where one is safe from the tempests of public life. He differs from their position in that he perceives behind chance events a hidden order, governed by the providence of the Christian God. The assaults of *Fortuna* belong to this hidden order. They should be regarded as benign divine aid to help mankind realize it is wrong to pin one's happiness on the acquisition of worldly goods. Instead, only the possession of wisdom is truly secure. Since Christ is incarnated Wisdom, only those who submit themselves to His authority will obtain the true happy life.

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120 This is demonstrated, for instance, by the need for Romanianus to experience adversity in order to understand that only wisdom can provide true, and secure happiness. Augustine's sudden illness finally enabled him to break free from the worldly chains that kept him delaying his search for wisdom. His continued prayer to ask God for further insight in *Soliloquia*, but also the full implications of accepting the Incarnation (Christ is Wisdom), show that also the acquisition of wisdom can only really happen under divine assistance.

## 3.2. Apuleius: *Fortuna* Guides Unknowingly to the Tranquil Harbour

There is another pagan source, which comes much closer to Augustine's interpretation of *Fortuna*: Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, one of the most famous conversion stories of Antiquity. As a conversion story it is very suitable to be discussed together with Augustine's *Confessiones* in the next chapter. One particular passage makes it also especially relevant to what Augustine has to say about his conversion in the Cassiciacum dialogues.

When Lucius, finally regains his human form, a priest of Isis declares:

> Multis et variis exanclatis laboribus magnisque Fortunae tempestatibus et maximis actus procellis ad portum Quietis et aram Misericordiae tandem, Luci, venisti. Nec tibi natales ac ne dignitas quidem, vel ipsa, qua flores, usquam doctrina profuit, sed lubrico virentis aetatulae ad serviles delapsus voluptates curiositatis inprosperae sinistrum praemium reportasti. Sed utcumque Fortunae caecitas, dum te pessimis periculis discruciat, ad religiosam istam beatitudinem inprovida produxit malitia. Eat nunc et summo furore saeviat et crudelitati suae materiem quaerat aliam; nam in eos, quorum sibi vitas <in> servitium deae nostrae maiestas vindicavit, non habet locum casus infestus. [...] In tutelam iam receptus es Fortunae, sed videntis, quae suae lucis splendore ceteros etiam deos illuminat. [...] en ecce pristinis aerumnis absolutus Isidis magnae providentia gaudens Lucius de sua Fortuna triumphat.
>
> *You have been driven before the heavy storms and the heaviest gales of Fortuna, but you have finally reached the harbour of peace and the altar of mercy. Your high birth, and what is more, your rank and your accomplished learning have been of no avail to you whatever. In the green years of youth, you tumbled on the slippery slope into slavish pleasures, and gained the ill-omened reward of your unhappy curiosity. Yet somehow Fortuna in her blind course, while torturing you with the most severe dangers, has in her random persecution guided you to this state of religious blessedness. So she can now head off and muster her most savage rage in search of some other victim for her cruelty, for hostile chance has no influence over those whose lives our majestic goddess has adopted into her service. [...] You have now been taken under the protection of Fortuna with eyes, who with the brilliance of her light lends lustre even to the other gods. [...] Behold, Lucius is delivered from his earlier privations, and as he rejoices in the providence of the great Isis, he triumphs over his Fortuna.*

The similarities between Augustine's Christian position and this view are striking. Here also, a man is driven by the vicissitudes of *Fortuna* towards the harbour (of peace) and conversion, and it is made clear that his intrinsic worth (high birth, learnedness) has been of no avail to him. The weakness of man necessitates divine aid, which in this story comes from the Egyptian saviour goddess Isis. At his conversion, Lucius has exchanged the tormenting harassments of blind *Fortuna*, for the blessed protection of *Fortuna* with eyes, i.e. Isis. Within the context of conversion, one can also take this to indicate that Lucius was blind, and now can see: his life, and everything around him has received new meaning. Despite the parallels with Augustine's conversion, there are still some differences, which makes the religion of Isis less challenging to traditional ideology than Augustine's Christian faith.

First of all, there is Lucius' continued worldly success once he is under the protection of Isis.[121] The goddess promises him fame in his future life.[122] There seems to be no breach here in his worldly pursuit of riches: making one's customary contributions to worldly society, and serving Isis are fully compatible. Only Lucius' curiosity has been punished, and subsequently healed. Worldly success does therefore not seem to be an issue, and is certainly not depreciated.

The integration of the Isis religion within traditional ideology, is also helped by the fact that the religion of Isis does not make worshipping the Roman gods irrelevant. She is incorporated within the Roman pantheon, whom she seems to represent as a whole. Some call her, for instance, Cecropian Minerva, some Paphian Venus, some Diana, and others Juno. In this way, Roman religion is being preserved, and with it, Roman culture and ideology.

Also *Fortuna* seems to preserve many traits of the Roman traditional *Fortuna.* The case that her vicious behaviour towards Lucius was actually benevolent, because it drove him "into the arms of Isis", has not been made. Rather, the Roman goddess is sharply contrasted with Isis, who seems, at a certain moment to have taken pity on Lucius, and has come to the rescue. This does not take away that, if one were to think the whole thing through, also *Fortuna*'s vicious assaults must eventually have been under the providence of Isis. Here the reminiscence of Augustine's Christian view on *Fortuna* is the greatest.

Important for later, when Augustine's doctrine of grace is discussed, is that the priest says about Lucius: '*Doubtless through the purity and faith of his former life he has deserved such sovereign protection from heaven, and in consequence he has been in a manner reborn, and has at once pledged himself to the service of her cult*'.[123] Apparently, the protection of Isis has to be deserved, which will stand in sharp contrast with the unmerited given grace of the Christian God. Hereby is also something of the traditional idea of *virtus* being preserved. In theory, Lucius can boast of his worthiness which earned him such divine attention. Also the commands Lucius needs to observe, like living in chastity, and abstinence from meat and wine, are presented as matters of self-discipline, commanded by Isis. He therefore has to fall back on his own (unaided) inner strength.

The religion of Isis seems an alternative for Romans to obtain happiness, which in this case means, above all, to be released from *Fortuna*'s torments. Although this religion has in common with Christianity that divine aid is needed from an all-powerful divinity, the Isis

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121 J.G. Griffiths 1975, p. 164: 'His success at the bar scarcely merits such splendid terms'.
122 APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses* XI. 6: '*Your future life will be blessed, and under my protection will bring you fame*'.
123 APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses* XI. 16.

religion preserves several aspects of traditional Roman ideology: the acknowledgment of the Roman gods, the active involvement in society with prosperous outcome, and the overall confirmation of man's own capacities, which are being rewarded by the divinity. In this sense, Christianity is a more extreme religion of salvation, since (in theory) it uncompromisingly rejects Roman religion, and some of the fundamental principles of traditional ideology on which its society was based.

## 3.3. A Philosophical Discussion of the Role of *Fortuna*

The fact that Augustine returns to the topic of *Fortuna* at the beginning of book III of *De Academcis*, shows how important Augustine thinks his view on *Fortuna* is. He wishes to defend the case "ad contemnendam Fortunam, Fortuna ipsa opus esse.[124] This is the first time that the subject is touched upon in the philosophical discussion proper. On the other two occasions, *Fortuna* is being considered in the two introductory epistles, which were composed afterwards by Augustine alone.

The immediate occasion to involve the concept of *Fortuna* in the debate on the Academic position is that Augustine regrets that the day before they hardly had any time left to pursue philosophy, because of the great amount of household work. Augustine therefore launches the idea that '*nothing is necessary for a man who is already wise; but in order that he may become wise, Fortuna is very necessary*'.[125] He restates this point of view in words echoing what he states in his first introduction:

> *Whoever wishes to arrive at the harbour of philosophy and at a lasting and peaceful country, so to speak, must have Fortuna, it seems to me, to attain that which he has desired, since, to pass over other points, if he is blind or deaf, he cannot obtain what lies in the power of Fortuna to give him.*[126]

Augustine deliberately introduces here the topic of *Fortuna* within the discussion, even though it is not immediately relevant to the general discussion concerning the academic position. The result is that the opening of each book someway or another argues for a renewed understanding of *Fortuna.* Probably no member of the group was familiar at the time with the content of Augustine's introductory epistles in book I and II, which provides further clarification of what exactly he had in mind with this general thesis. Augustine is arguing here for the necessity of seeking God's aid through prayer, and to bow before Christian authority so that one may become wise and reach the true happy life.

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[124] Augustine will repeat this in *De Academicis* III. ii (3).

[125] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* III. ii (2).

[126] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* III. ii (3): 'ita quisquis ad sapientiae portum, et quasi firmissimum et quietissimum solum pervenire voluerit – quoniam, ut alia omittam, si caecus ac surdus fuerit, non potest, quod positum est in potestate Fortunae – necessariam mihi videtur ad id, quod concupivit, habere Fortunam'.

In the discussion that unfolds between Alypius and Augustine, Alypius still reasons within a Stoic frame of mind, while Augustine already has departed from such a traditionalist view. The latter essentially argues that man's *virtus* cannot be sufficient to reach the happy life, so that divine aid becomes crucial. Although Augustine informs his readers that he has already reached the haven of philosophy (or wisdom), he does not yet consider himself wise and happy. He therefore remains greatly in need of "*Fortuna*", for instance, because he needs enough spare time to devote himself to Wisdom.

In *De Academicis* Augustine considers himself better off than Romanianus, because he already has reached the "haven of philosophy", but this does not mean that he already is a wise man.[127] In the introduction of *De beata vita* he states he is still seeking to land his boat, although he has arrived at the entrance of the haven of philosophy.[128] He considers Manlius Theodorus to be already in the blessed region of the happy life. In *Retractationes*, Augustine will withdraw this statement.[129] By then he has realized that in this life, no one can be considered really happy: it remains a promise for Christians in the afterlife. Also in *De ordine*, he considers himself merely a boy in philosophy, which implies that he is still far away from his goal, i.e. being a wise, and therefore a happy, man.[130]

All this makes clear that Augustine believes he continues to be in need of *Fortuna*'s help (which he understands as *auxilium Christiani Dei*) at Cassiciacum. The morally superior(!) Alypius, however, rather bluntly responds: '*I do not see why, in order to become wise, I should either desire the favour of Fortuna or fear its disfavour*'.

This is a position also Augustine accepts at the time, but only concerning the wise man:

> *Those who are most truly wise, and whom alone it is right to pronounce happy, have maintained that Fortuna's favours ought not to be the objects of either fear or desire.*

This sentiment is echoed in the first introductory epistle of *De Academicis*. In the *portus sapientiae*, *Fortuna*, favourable or unfavourable, cannot affect him.[131]

This should be understood in the context of the traditional view on *Fortuna*, who controls the worldly goods. To Augustine it means that the wise man, who lives in Christ, is

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[127] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. iii (9).
[128] AUGUSTINE, *De beata vita* i. (5).
[129] AUGUSTINE, *Retractationes* I. ii (1).
[130] This is the issue of a letter to Nebridius (*epistula* III, AD 387), who after having read *De Academicis* claims that Augustine is a happy man: '*Is it not true, as Nebridius affirms, that I am happy? Absolutely true it cannot be, for that I am still far from wise he himself would not deny. But may not a happy life be the lot even of those who are not wise? That is scarcely possible; because, in that case, lack of wisdom would be a small misfortune, and not, as it actually is, the one and only source of unhappiness*'.
[131] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (1).

strong enough not to let worldly matters, even the fear of death, shake one's happiness.[132] His greatest fear is the fear of death, and that is why Augustine has such a high regard for his mother Monnica's talent in philosophy:

> Cumque in ea tantum profeceris, ut jam nec cujusvis incommodi fortuiti nec ipsius mortis, quod viris doctissimis difficillimum est, horrore terrearis, quam summam philosophiae arcem omnes esse confitentur, egone me non libenter tibi etiam discipulum dabo?
>
> *Seeing that you [i.e. Monnica] have made such an advance in it [i.e. wisdom] that you are not frightened by the dread of any chance discomfort or even death itself – a most difficult attainment for even the most learned, and a position which all acknowledge to be the stoutest stronghold of philosophy – in view of all this, shall I not gladly entrust myself to you even as a disciple?*

The problem for Augustine is that he wants to defend the idea that becoming wise has to happen within the Christian faith, insisting that God's aid remains vital in the process of obtaining wisdom. God's helping hand he discerns in *Fortuna*'s behaviour. At the same time, however, he falls back on the traditional concept of *Fortuna* and happiness, when he states that the wise man should desire nor fear *Fortuna.*

Alypius starts from man's own capacities, and throughout the debate he perceives *Fortuna* to be the enemy of man's *virtus*, not his assistant, stressing the need to remain untouched by her assaults (or by her deceitful blessings). His adoption of the sceptic position, a wise man is someone who searches for the truth, allows him to argue that already when he is searching for wisdom, he is a happy man, who desires, nor fears *Fortuna.*

Therese Furher, too, perceives an overall difference in understanding *Fortuna* between the two friends, which has become so crucial in Augustine's proselytising strategy:

> *Es handelt sich vielmehr um einen Gedankenaustausch, wobei deutlich wird, dass Augustins Fortuna-Begriff grundsätzlich positiv geprägt ist (im Sinn eines divinum auxilium, während Alypius sich an heidnischen Vorstellungen orientiert (Fortuna als unberechenbare Macht, die es zu bezwingen gilt).*[133]

Alypius asks how much right Augustine attributes to *Fortuna.* It seems that slowly they are finding common ground: the "favour" of *Fortuna* is indeed needed to be able to despise her. This seemingly paradoxical statement turns into Augustine's Christian frame of mind: Christian divine assistance is needed to learn to despise the things of this world. Sergius Orata had the "misfortune" of being constantly blessed by *Fortuna*, so that he never came to realize that his happiness was pending on unreliable goods. All his actions were based on the wrong premises, which made him an utter fool. In the group's eyes he was therefore far from happy, especially because he never found out how unhappy he actually was.

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[132] See also for this *Soliloquia* I. ix (16) where he sums up three possible sources of anxiety, which could disturb his tranquillity: the fear of the loss of those he loves, the fear of suffering, and the fear of death. All these circumstances were traditionally in the hands of *Fortuna.*

[133] Therese Fuhrer 1999, p. 233; see also p. 238.

Alypius merely accepts the position that *Fortuna*'s whimsical behaviour makes man understand that her goods are unreliable. It does not necessarily follow for him that *Fortuna* is benign, and even less so, that man becomes dependent on her. He does not understand why Augustine wants to attribute to *Fortuna* such a positive role in man's life. While conceding that some help is required to realize the pre-eminence of wisdom and the deceptive appeal of *Fortuna*'s worldly goods, he nevertheless contends that man's *virtus* is strong enough to do without *Fortuna*'s assistance.

Therese Fuhrer assumes that Augustine agrees in the end with Alypius' position, so that Augustine's initial complaint that their household duties were preventing them from holding further discussions has been rejected.[134] However, Augustine's basic contention remains that a man who searches for Wisdom is in need of divine help [i.e. *Fortuna*] not only to resist temptation,[135] but also to obtain the Truth; hence, for instance, his prayer at the beginning of *Soliloquia*, asking God for illumination. Alypius, on the other hand, still seems to deny at the end of the discussion this kind of need of "*Fortuna*". He does not perceive her as the necessary *divinum auxilium*, let alone *auxilium christiani Dei*, which Augustine thought essential for possessing Wisdom.

Augustine closes the debate on *Fortuna*, not because he agrees in the end with Alypius, but because he cannot immediately win over Alypius to adopt his position. One of the difficulties Augustine encounters is that he wishes to make use of the traditional concept of *Fortuna* to convey something radically different: he posits *Fortuna* as a benevolent force, and claims that one should surrender to her in certain circumstances, because she can assist you to the happy life. On the other hand, he wishes to hold on to the idea that the wise man is unmoved by *Fortuna*, favourable or unfavourable, taking over the traditional view on happiness, and this causes confusion. Unlike Alypius, Augustine cannot accept the position that no divine help is necessary in order to become wise. This would run counter to what he wrote in his first introduction, and to his fundamental motivation to become Christian: we need the help of God to reach the happy life.

This once again puts Alypius' conversion in an odd light. He had, so it seems, a remarkable strength within himself to lead an upright life, he did not think well of mentioning Christ in the dialogues, was not sure about baptism, and now, he does not think that *Fortuna* is needed in order to become wise. This indirectly confirms the belief that one

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[134] Therese Fuhrer 1999, p. 233.

[135] This becomes clear from the second introduction of *De Academicis*, wherein Romanianus is urged to pray that he will not be deflected from his course towards the *portus philosophiae*.

can rely on one's own strength, i.e. one's own *virtus*, to reach the happy life. How different from Augustine he seems to us now!

One has the impression from the way he introduces the theme of *Fortuna* at the beginning of book III, that Augustine is especially alluding to the need for financial goods, when he posited that man needs the help of *Fortuna* to become wise. He knew he was going to run into financial difficulties if he continued his treasured leisured life in search for Wisdom.[136] There might be an underlying reason to have this discussion included in a dialogue addressed to Romanianus. His patron and friend was the most likely person who could provide Augustine with the worldly goods of *Fortuna*, enabling the group to continue their search for Wisdom. In this way, Romanianus could continue to play his role as an agent within the Christian providential order to help Augustine reach the happy life.[137] Augustine is praying that Romanianus will join his group, and he seeks God's assistance to bring this about. Augustine, too, would enjoy a favourable wind of *Fortuna*, if Romanainus could be persuaded, because his financial input could further finance their expensive leisured pursuit of wisdom. Since God already has (pre-)arranged his ill-health to make for him a leisured life possible, Augustine is convinced that God will further come to his aid in his pious desire to have more time available to learn to know Him (i.e. Wisdom) by releasing him from his financial worries.

## 3.4. Licentius' Short-lived Conversion Experience (*De ordine*, book I)

In *De ordine*, Augustine wishes to discuss further the concept of providential order. He wants to discover the hidden causes behind chance events, and understand their place and purpose within the whole:

> Ordinem rerum, Zenobi, consequi ac tenere cuique proprium, tum vero universitatis quo coercetur ac regitur hic mundus, vel videre vel pandere difficillimum hominibus atque rarissimum est.[138]
>
> *To perceive and to grasp the order of reality proper to each thing, and then to see or to explain the order of the entire universe by which this world is truly held together and governed, that, Zenobius, is a difficult and rare achievement for men.*

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[136] This chimes in with his earlier statement that in the past he felt prevented from embarking upon his life of philosophy because of his financial responsibilities towards his dependents.

[137] See also AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (4): '*Of what you have been the minister I have up till now grasped more by faith than I have comprehended by reason*'. Augustine thought Romanianus played a providential role in his help to realize his (Christian) life in philosophy.

[138] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. i (1).

The overall content of the discussion that unfolds is relevant to the topic of *Fortuna*: the case is being made for the existence of a universal and benevolent Christian providential order, wherein pure chance (controlled by a whimsical *Fortuna*) has no place. However, the focus in this chapter will be on the story that unfolds during the tutorials, because, as P. Cary shows, 'a veritable conversion' is narrated in book I of *De ordine*.[139]

The immediate occasion to start a proper debate on order is important here. Late at night, Augustine is puzzled by the irregularity of the sound of running water flowing through the roof-gutter. While trying to find the cause of this, he suddenly hears his pupil Licentius, the son of Romanianus, striking his bed with a piece of wood, to scare away a field mouse.[140] Augustine soon realizes that also his other pupil, Trygetius, is awake. He then decides, as an experienced teacher, to hold a discussion during the night on the topic of universal order, starting from the mystery of the irregularity of the sound of the water flow. When he puts this problem before his two pupils, Licentius comes with an ingenious response: leaves which continuously fall from the trees temporarily block the channel, until they yield to the pressure of the current, so that the process can start all over again.[141] The sound is therefore not purely random or uncaused, but perfectly explainable within a causational order. As a true chaos theorist Licentius has demonstrated that even irregular ("chaotic") events have a place within a deterministic, causational order. He thereby firmly holds on to two interconnected Stoic principles: 'nihil fieri sine causa' and 'nihilque praeter ordinem fieri posse',[142] thereby rejecting the Epicurean doctrine of a chance universe. Licentius slowly becomes aware that a divine thing is beginning to reveal itself to him through his inspired answers. Augustine is overjoyed, and believes that Licentius will soon be converted to the Catholic faith, since he knows from which God this divine inspiration is coming.[143] Another challenging problem is set before the boys: the falling of the leaves from the trees seems to be random. Licentius again refuses to think that this happens by

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[139] P. Cary, 'What Licentius Learned: A Narrative Reading of the Cassiciacum Dialogues', *Augustinian Studies* 29:1 (1998), 141-163 (p. 148).

[140] I accept that the events recounted in *De ordine* all really happened, and that Augustine did not afterwards invent them.

[141] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I (iii) 7. There is doubt about the historicity of this dialogue, because of the striking intelligent answers of Licentius. This objection is correct, but one should wonder whether the answers of Licentius have not been made more impressive by Augustine during the editing, while still remaining within the boundaries of a flexible truth. Augustine had a good reason to do so, since he wished to bring out well that Licentius was receiving divine aid in his inspiration, something the boy himself seems to become aware of.

[142] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. iv (11) and I. iii (9).

[143] Augustine cites a line of Virgil first, comparing this divine guidance with Apollo: 'Sic Pater ille deum faciat, sic altus Apollo' (VIRGIL, *Aeneid* x, 875) (AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. iv (10)). However, this is purely done to make it more stylish for Licentius, who loves poetry. There is no doubt here, that Augustine believes it is the Christian God Who is assisting Licentius at the moment. Also in *De ordine* i.v. (13) Augustine makes clear he believes that the Christian God is answering through Licentius.

chance. Instead, he gives a list of causes, why a certain leaf would fall there and then,[144] and he persuasively defends his idea about order.

Augustine then wishes to talk about what the benefit is to man of such events happening. He suggests that the leaves falling into the stream can make men become aware of the order of things.[145] Licentius eagerly seizes upon this interpretation, and now believes that the field mouse came out in order that Augustine would discover that he was awake, when he tried to chase it away from his bed with a wooden piece! Even Augustine's questions, Licentius feels, are part of this grand order, because in the way they are phrased, they elicit particular responses from him.[146]

All this should have sounded as music in the ears of Augustine, but it is clear that Licentius has above all the Stoic order in mind, and he is very keen to jump on the topic of divination in his discovery of the order. Augustine is not happy that the conversation would take this direction. He warns Licentius not to go down that path, since much has been said in literature against the art of divination.[147] Nevertheless, Licentius' further intelligent answers concerning order, give Augustine hope that he soon will become a son to him as well.[148] This is further indication that Licentius was moving towards conversion. Later, Licentius becomes averse to his favourite poetry writing, and is now totally gripped by the light of philosophy. Subsequently he gives thanks to Christ.[149] After such words Augustine exults, since he now believes that Licentius has given himself to Christ and philosophy. When editing this event, Augustine realizes that he had been too optimistic about the profundity of Licentius' conversion, because he did not seem to be very serious about it afterwards. Already the next day it becomes clear that youthful playfulness rather than sincere commitment, elicited by divine order, has brought his "conversion" about.[150] Licentius is often absent from the further discussions, and once more far more interested in his poetry. He will also not follow Augustine into baptism the following Easter.

We witness here a proselytising attempt from Augustine, this time to bring Romanianus' son, Licentius, to the Catholic faith, which results in the latter's half-hearted conversion to Christian philosophy. The strategy Augustine thereby follows is similar to his efforts to convert Romanianus: to reveal a Christian providential order behind the

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[144] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. iv (11): '*What about the location of the trees and their branches, and the very weight of the leaves, in so far as nature has determined it?*'
[145] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. v (13).
[146] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. v (14).
[147] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. vi (15). Augustine, no doubt, had *De divinatione* of Cicero in mind.
[148] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. vi (16).
[149] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. viii (21).
[150] Interestingly, Licentius says about this event: '*Whether you will smile at it as my boyish levity and fickleness or whether it is being effected in us by a divine bidding and order, this I will nor hesitate to declare to you: I am suddenly becoming quite averse to those poetic matters*' (AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. viii (21)).

randomness of *Fortuna.* In *De ordine*, no blow of *Fortuna*, but a coinciding of two events, the irregular sound of a water flow and the appearance of a field mouse, which signalled to Augustine Licentius was awake, had a positive purpose: to ensue a nightly conversation on universal order wherein Licentius will discover that he is guided by divine inspiration. This will lead him towards the Catholic faith. Indeed, the boy underwent that night the anticipated conversion experience, but not as profound as his teacher had hoped for.

This conversion story recorded (and "directed") by Augustine comes very close in time after his own conversion to the Catholic faith. It provides us with important material to evaluate Augustine's story in *Confessiones*, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Worth investigating is whether the discovery of the Christian providential order behind chance events, and seeming coincidences, played also a crucial role in his conversion to the Catholic faith.

## 3.5. SUMMARY

The revelation of God's providential role in human life is fundamental in Augustine's attempt to convert his friends. First Romanianus, then his son Licentius, are being revealed a Christian providential order, which involves an active role of the Christian God, who arranges the circumstances in such a way that He calls His subject towards Him. Chance events traditionally belong to the realm of *Fortuna.* They are considered to be meaningless and often destructive to the established order. Augustine interprets them in a novel way. The unfair treatment by a shrewd opponent, who manages to cause considerable financial loss to Romanianus via the corruptible jurisdiction at Milan, and Augustine's sudden ill-health, are actually blessings in disguise, because they induce the victims to set sail to the *portus philosophiae (Christianae)*, where true happiness can be found. Even on the surface meaningless and trivial coincidences have actually a hidden purpose. The sound of the irregular flow of water and the sudden appearance of a field mouse may seem not interconnected, but they are actually arranged by the Christian God, so that a conversation could ensue between Augustine and Licentius on the theme of order. This discussion would then ideally have led the divinely inspired Licentius to embrace the true philosophy, which implies conversion to the Catholic faith.[151] It is crucial for Augustine that one should not just embark upon any philosophy if one wishes to find wisdom. His philosophy is based on accepting that Christ is incarnated Wisdom, and it requires submission to Him and to the

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[151] The only half-hearted conversion of Licentius to (Christianity and philosophy) already indicates that Augustine is overconfident in grasping the correct hidden divine purpose behind events.

Catholic faith. His justification for humbling oneself in this way lies exactly in his disclosure of a hidden universal and providential order. It demonstrates God's continuous care for individuals, offering a life-line for them to reach true happiness.

# 4. AUGUSTINE'S PLANS AFTER HIS CASSICIACUM STAY

## 4.1. The Change from *otium honestum* to the Founding of a Monastery

Despite Augustine's efforts to involve his friends in his new project, no one else decided to join the small party at Cassiciacum. During his retreat there, he could not persuade Romanianus, while Licentius' conversion experience was short-lived. At the beginning of March AD 387 the group returned to Milan. On the night of the 23th - 24th of April AD 387, Augustine, his son Adeodatus, and his friend Alypius received their baptism from the hands of Ambrose in the basilica of Milan. During their further stay in the imperial capital, they associated with them their fellow-townsman Evodius, who was already a *fidelis*.[152] After some deliberation, they agreed to leave renowned Milan, to set up an inchate household fellowship of God's servants on the small property of the *Aurelii* in their insignificant hometown of Thagaste.[153] According to *Confessiones* this was the place where they thought they could be of most use in God's service.[154] Probably, also their lack of financial resources played an important role in their decision to return to Africa. Without Romanianus' participation they had to tap a different source of income to continue their unique kind of *otium*. Augustine's inherited estate in Thagaste could provide them with modest, but sufficient, means to continue their contemplative way of life.[155] By adopting the ecclesiastical status of *servi Dei*,[156] they exchanged the traditional presentation of their retirement at Cassiciacum for something more outspoken ecclesiastical.

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[152] AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* IX. viii (17); D. Wright ('Monnica's Baptism, Augustine's Deferred Baptism, and Patricius', *Augustinian Studies* 29:2 (1998), 1-17 (p. 7)) rightly stresses the limited number of full members within the group: only Augustine, Alypius , Adeodatus and Evodius can be regarded to be baptized men, leading a chaste life. It remains unclear whether Augustine's brother, Navigius, was ever a baptized Christian, while we do not know the whereabouts of Nebridius at teh time, and when exactly he was baptized.

[153] G. Bonner (1986, p. 96) states that it was Augustine and Monnica who decided to return to Africa, but the text makes clear that it was the whole group, and perhaps more weight should be given to Alypius and Evodius than Monnica about this decision.

[154] AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* IX. viii (17).

[155] It remains further the question whether Augustine was required to take up his inherited position as *decurio* in his hometown. He was no longer protected by his imperial appointment of professor of rhetoric, neither had he obtained the privileged title of *clarissmus*.

[156] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* CLIIIVI, 1.

During their journey back to Africa, wherein the threat of civil war kept them from crossing the Mediterranean Sea,[157] Augustine's mother died in the Italian port town of Ostia.[158] They travelled to Rome, where they waited until it was safe again to make the crossing to the African continent. The company finally arrived in the autumn of AD 388 via Carthage in Thagaste, where a new chapter in their lives began. Augustine could not persuade Nebridius to join him. His dear friend had now also become a *fidelis*, and was living back at his home near Carthage. Neither could Nebridius induce Augustine to leave behind his small local community to come and live with him, even though fellow-citizens seemed to have considerably curbed on Augustine's free time.[159] Augustine seemed to have been content with his new life in Thagaste, which he described as "*deificari in otio*" ('*to become a god in leisurely retirement*') in a letter to Nebridius.[160]

P. Brown suggests that during their stay in Thagaste (AD 388 – AD 391), the little community of *servi Dei* gradually came to organize itself as a monastery, with Augustine as its "spiritual father".[161] Augustine never seemed to have been happy with a solitary life of contemplation. He needed the company of - and the interaction with - likeminded friends, so that his scholarly Christian retirement in Thagaste probably retained something of the classroom atmosphere of his Cassiciacum stay, and even of the original Epicurean styled philosophical project his group of cultivated friends had tried to set up in Milan.

It is difficult to assess how big an impact the death of Nebridius, but above all, the early death of his son Adeodatus (AD 390?) had on the further development of his community. P. Brown comments: 'This double blow is one of the most significant blanks in Augustine's life'.[162] J.J. O'Donnell links Augustine's decision in early AD 391 to leave his family estate and to move to the African port town of Hippo, to Adeodatus' death:

> *He did not leave the isolation of Thagaste and did not think of accepting a life elsewhere until after his son died – until, that is, the worldly hopes of his family had been extinguished and until there was no son to whim to leave the property he had himself inherited from his father.*[163]

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[157] The usurper general Maximus was blockading the harbours of Rome (P. Brown 2000, p. 121).
[158] This is recounted in AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* IX. viii (17).
[159] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* V. This letter is from Nebridius to Augustine (*c.* AD 388), wherein he expresses his concern about the fact that fellow-citizens withheld Augustine from the leisure he so much desired.
[160] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* X.2; see also the article of G. Folliet, "'Deificari in otio": Augustin, *Epistula* x, 2' *Recherches augustiniennes* 2 (1962), 225-236. The letter dates from AD 389 or 390 (G. Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press Norwich, 1986), p. 6).
[161] P. Brown 2000, p. 129. It should be noticed, however, that the party already was experiencing life within a male Christian community of *servi Dei* after their baptism in Italy, with Monnica as the caring mother of the group (See D. Wright 1998, pp. 5-6, commenting on *Confessiones* IX. ix (22)).
[162] P. Brown 2000, p. 128.
[163] J.J. O'Donnell 2001, p. 19.

At Hippo, he not only hoped to recruit a potential new member for his community, but he was also looking for a place to set up a proper monastery.[164] Perhaps this plan, too, should be linked with the death of Adeodatus: 'only with his son's death was Augustine properly rootless, only then eligible to take up easily the disconnected life of a monk'.[165] Anyway, in AD 391 the initially loose organization of his small household community of *servi Dei*, living *in christianae vitae otio* at Thagaste, seemed to reach its final stage in the founding of a formal monastery, which Augustine hoped to set up in Hippo.

## 4.2. The Abrupt End of *christianae vitae otium*

Then something happened, which drastically altered his life. When attending a Church service at Hippo, Augustine was suddenly forced into ordination through popular acclaim, under the impulse of the aged Greek bishop Valerius. The impact of this event on his life is hard to underestimate. Augustine had to give up his tranquil haven, and was obliged to return to public life, where he was likely to be harrassed by "the winds of *Fortuna*". Although not so long ago he considered the position of a clergyman to be the only alternative to his way of life, he certainly would have preferred to continue his life in retirement.[166] There remained a vast difference between the active public life of a clergyman, and the contemplative, secluded life of a would-be monk.

Augustine was at the time very distraught about this radical, unwanted change in his life. He was aware of the danger of such enforced ordination. Since he was a well-known *servus Dei*, he knew he would be a much sought-after candidate to fill up ecclesiastical posts. Therefore, he carefully avoided dioceses where the bishop's seat was vacant. Hippo already had a bishop (the elderly Valerius), so that Augustine could assume there was no risk in visiting the town. Unfortunately, Augustine could not have anticipated that bishop Valerius was looking for a gifted presbyter to assist him in his duties.

J.J. O'Donnell reconstructs Augustine's immediate reaction to the events: there are signs of panic, resistance, and even possibly an attempt to escape his "fate", by fleeing to Thagaste.[167] Possidius tells us that he wept at his ordination.[168] This is confirmed in a letter

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[164] AUGUSTINE, *Sermones* CCCLV.2.
[165] J.J. O'Donnell 2001, p. 19. He probably goes too far when he states that 'it is worth underlining just how much the Augustine of 387-391, the man who had abandoned his worldly career and returned to Africa, was ready to disappear from view as a mild-mannered country squire with philosophical and literary interests'.
[166] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* X.2-3. In this letter he says how glad his is with leading a contemplative life, as opposed to the life of a bishop embroiled in worldly matters.
[167] J.J. O'Donnell 2001, p. 19.
[168] POSSIDIUS, *Vita Augustini* IV.2.

of Augustine to bishop Valerius, probably written from his hometown Thagaste.[169] He wrote that some people had misunderstood his weeping. They thought that he was disappointed, because he was not immediately being made a bishop, and instead had to settle with the inferior rank of presbyter. In this letter he explains that he wept because he felt '*shame of having once thought ill of clergymen and their congregations*'.[170] However, this may not have been the immediate true reason behind his tears, but rather a diplomatically more acceptable clarification. More likely he wept, because he was suddenly forced to give up the kind of life he always believed would render him the happy life. Augustine must have felt distraught, because his plan to found a monastery had been suddenly trampled underfoot by a shrewd move of the old bishop Valerius and his congregation. Augustine's continued predilection for a monastic life is illustrated by the fact that he obtained Valerius' permission to set up a monastery in the garden-cloister of the bishop. By living in this community as a priest-monk, he managed to preserve something of what he once thought was going to be his life-long vocation.

With his forced ordination in early AD 391, Augustine's life of *otium* came to an abrupt end.[171] As a priest he was officially exempted from his municipal duties in Thagaste, and he managed to give his inheritance and property to the local church.[172] In AD 395 he advanced to the episcopate of the Catholic community of Hippo, in what actually had been an irregular, because pre-arranged, appointment by his bishop Valerius. Augustine would remain throughout his life attached to his see of Hippo Regius. He managed to combine the very demanding ecclesiastical duties with his so much desired contemplative life in the garden-cloister. The massive outpour of writings during his ecclesiastical career shows with what determination Augustine must have used every spare moment to dictate to his scribes his thoughts.

## 4.3. The Impact of this Change of Life on his Thinking

### 4.3.1. God's inscrutable ways

Augustine needed to adjust his understanding of God's purpose in his life. In the dialogues he was convinced that God had guided him to his destination, the Christian haven of

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[169] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* XXI.
[170] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* XXI.
[171] He refers to this abrupt end of leisure in *Epistula* CI.3. He intended to write another six books (perhaps on music) during the leisure he expected to have before him, but then the burden of ecclesiastical concerns was laid upon him, so he had to abandon this project.
[172] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* CXXVI.7.

philosophy, where he believed the blessed life resided. Especially in the introduction of *De beata vita* he makes clear that nothing could tempt him to return again to public life.[173] Now he was forced to do precisely this. How was this allowed to happen? In the words of J.J. O'Donnell, 'it was chance that took him in 391 to Hippo where chance again seized him and made him a clergyman'.[174] "Chance" had no place in Augustine's Christian worldview, because everything had to be brought back to God's providential order. Augustine had to find a reason why God had arranged the events in such a way that he was forced to leave his desired haven. He concluded:

> Arbitror dominum meum propterea me sic emendare voluisse, quod multorum peccata nautarum, antequam expertus essem, quid illic agitur, quasi doctior et melior reprehendere audebam.[175]
>
> *I imagine that it was my Lord's intention to chastise me because I was bold enough to rebuke many sailors for their faults, as though I were a wiser and better man, before experience had taught me the nature of their work.*

Augustine came to believe that God had rebuked him, because from his ivory tower he had arrogantly criticised clergymen, while he had no idea how difficult their tasks were. Now he was himself compelled to sail as a clergyman on the turbulent sea of ecclesiastical public life. In His inscrutable ways, God had taught Augustine a lesson in humility, and the latter found out to his cost how weak man's self-determination was in the face of God's will.

### 4.3.2. The lost dream of the happy life

In his letter to bishop Valerius, Augustine asked to have first some time off (until Easter AD 391) to study *Scripture* more attentively than he had hitherto done, in preparation of his new task.[176] He was expected to preach almost immediately, which was unusual for a priest, since this was normally a prerogative of the bishop. His shift in study led to a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of Christian teaching as opposed to (Neo-)Platonic philosophy.

Around this time Augustine came to believe that the happy life was unattainable in this life. This marked a further break between classical and Christian understanding of the happy life.[177] In *De ordine*, he did not think (even Christian) people could be happy as long as they

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[173] AUGUSTINE, *De beata vita* i (2); *De Academicis* I. i (1).
[174] J.J. O'Donnell 2001, p. 19.
[175] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* XXI.2.
[176] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* XXI.
[177] Carol Harrison 2000, p. 100; P. Brown 2000, p. 150.

had not received a proper training in the liberal arts.[178] Now he came to believe that even the most learned and wise man could not reach true happiness in this world: it was held out as a hope far beyond this life.[179] Such a view made Augustine's earlier intention, *deificari in otio*, unachievable. He perhaps found such a bleak picture easier to accept more categorically once his dream of leading a happy life *in otio* had been ruthlessly taken away from him by the communty of Hippo.

### 4.3.3. The irresistible power of God's grace

Deeper study of Scripture - especially when he attempted to answer the questions posed by Simplicianus of Milan (*c.* AD 395) - made Augustine realize how profound and overwhelming God's saving grace actually was in people's life, and how totally dependent man was on it. Augustine's recognition that only 'delight' could stir someone to action, led to a considerable reduction of man's self-determination in life.[180]

> *The will itself can have no motive unless something presents itself to delight and stir the mind. That this should happen is not in any man's power.*[181]

Man has not under control what will come his way: this is in the power of God, Who can call a man in such a way that he will positively respond to this call, because he is delighted by it. This is a more profound and subtler conception of Augustine's earlier line of reasoning in the Cassiciacum dialogues that man is in need of "*Fortuna*" to become happy. He also acknowledged that only a (s)elect few will be saved, while the great mass is heading towards perdition. The crucial issue becomes: on what grounds does God make his choice in giving these (s)elect few his saving grace? Augustine is here at great loss: '*I just cannot find what criterion to apply in deciding which men should be chosen to be saved by grace*'.[182]

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[178] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* II. ix (26): 'Qui autem sola auctoritate contenti bonis tantum moribus rectisque votis constanter operam dederint, aut contemnentes, aut non valentes disciplinis liberalibus atque optimis erudiri, beatos eos quidem, cum inter homines vivunt, nescio quomodo appellem' ('*But as to those who are content to follow authority alone, and who apply themselves constantly to right living and holy desires, whilst they make no account of the liberal and fine arts, or are incapable of being instructed in them – I know not how I could call them happy as long as they live among men*'). This statement was later corrected by Augustine in his *Retractationes* (I. iii (2)): He regretted having attributed to the liberal arts such a great deal, about which many saintly persons did not know much.

[179] Augustine shows in *Soliloquia* that he himself was painfully aware how hard it was for him to attain (moral) perfection and to reach the happy life. Carol Harrison (2000 , p. 223) sees already here a foreshadowing of the idea that one is in continued need of divine grace, and that one can only live in hope to attain happiness in the life to come. However, at Cassiciacum he must have thought it still possible for some, since he assumed that Manlius Theodorus had already reached the happy life (*De beata vita* i. (5)).

[180] P. Brown 2000, p. 148.

[181] AUGUSTINE, *Ad Simplicianum de diversis quaestionibus* I. qu. 2 (22).

[182] AUGUSTINE, *Ad Simplicianum de diversis quaestionibus* I. qu. 2 (22).

Augustine's concept of grace and predestination will be further discussed in the last chapter, since it creates problems appertaining to the idea of *Fortuna*.[183]

With all these new insights fresh in mind, Augustine began to write his "spiritual autobiography": *Confessiones*.[184]

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183 W. S. Babcock writes: 'If there is no relevant human distinction between those who do and those who do not receive grace, then is not God's action utterly arbitrary and whimsical?' (W.S. Babcock, Augustine's interpretation of Romans (AD 394-396)', *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979), 55-74 (p. 62)).

184 F. Van Fleteren, 'St. Augustine's Theory of Conversion', in *Augustine: Second Founder of the Faith*, ed. by J.C. Schaubelt and F. Van Fleteren, Collectanea Augustiniana 2 (New York: Lang), pp. 65-80 (p. 74 n. 7): 'The *Confessiones* is an explication in Augustine's own life of his universal theory on the necessity of grace for human salvation'.

# CHAPTER III

# *CONFESSIONES:*

# GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL PLAN TO SAVE THE PREDESTINATED AUGUSTINE

*Looking for your fingerprints*
*I find them in coincidence*
*And make my faith to grow*
Suzanne Vega[1]

## 1. CHRISTIAN DIVINE PROVIDENCE INSTEAD OF *FORTUNA*

### 1.1. *Fortuna* Missing in *Confessiones*

Augustine has given us a short account of his turbulent journey towards his Christian haven of philosophy in the introductions of *De Academicis* and *De beata vita* (AD 386-387). These early versions of his life story abound in *Fortuna* imagery. Readers of these dialogues might have expected to find in the full-blown spiritual autobiography *Confessiones* (*c.* AD 397-399)[2] an expanded version of this initial outline, all the more because there existed a precedent for such a conversion story.

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[1] Taken from the song "The Penitent" on her album *Songs in Red and Grey* (2001).

[2] The actual story of his life is told in books I-IX. Nevertheless, the thirteen books of *Confessiones* form a marvellously integrated whole, so that the strict autobiographical material breaks through its limitations of subject, and becomes part of Augustine's overall theological views. See, for instance, K.B. Steinhauser, 'The Literary Unity of the *Confessions*' in *Augustine from Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. by Joanne McWilliam (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), pp. 15-30; J.C. Cooper, 'Why did Augustine write Books 11-13 of the Confessions?', in *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971), 37-46; Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, 'A Likely Story: The Autobiographical as Epideictic', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 57:1 (1989), 23-51 (pp. 24-25).

### 1.1.1. *Fortuna* in the conversion story of *Metamorphoses*

In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (or *Aureus Asinus*), *Fortuna* is given a prominent place.[3] Once the protagonist Lucius is turned into an ass as a result of his curiosity in magical practices, he is terribly harassed by the vicissitudes of a blind *Fortuna*.[4] The reader experiences analogous disarray: he, too, falls from one tragic (but entertaining) episode into the other, because a capricious *Fortuna* supplies the thread of the story. As a literary device, she loosely binds together the separate incidents.[5]

Only in the last book (XI), it emerges that *Fortuna* was something more than a stylistic figure. The goddess Isis intervenes and helps Lucius to regain his human shape. Isis' priest acknowledges that *Fortuna* in her random persecution has brought Lucius to his current state of religious blessedness.[6] Lucius will now serve Isis, enjoying the protection of "a *Fortuna* with eyes", i.e. Isis' providential care, instead of being harassed by a blind *Fortuna*.[7] In *Metamorphoses*, *Fortuna* and Isis ("*Fortuna* with eyes") are being treated as separate forces, whereby the dominion of a blind *Fortuna* is contrasted with Isis' providence.[8] In his *De Academicis*, Augustine, more unequivocally identified *Fortuna*'s workings with God's providential care.[9]

### 1.1.2. The Intimate and Universal Dimension of *Confessiones*

Augustine could have told his conversion story along similar lines.[10] Its main theme was suitable enough to have rendered an "Apuleian styled" version of his turbulent journey towards his 'harbour of peace':[11]

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[3] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 551.

[4] APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses* VII. 2: 'Subibatque me non de nihilo veteris priscaeque doctrinae viros finxisse ac pronuntiasse caenam et prorsus exoculatam esse Fortunam '*It occurred to me that learned men of old had good grounds for envisaging and describing Fortune as blind and utterly sightless*'. Also *Met.* VIII. 24.

[5] I. Kajanto 1981, pp. 551-552.

[6] APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses* XI. 15.

[7] P.G. Walsh (trans., introd. and notes), *Apuleius: The Golden Ass* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1994); Nancy Shumate, *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 316-317; I. Kajanto (1981, p. 551): 'Unlike Fortune, Isis is not blind; she guards the people who faithfully serve her'.

[8] I. Kajanto (1981, p. 552): 'Though Fortune is claimed to have been identified with Isis in the visual arts, it is unlikely that this had anything to do with the theme of Apuleius' novel. Fortuna and Isis are clearly quite different deities'. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the two forces represent one and the same divinity: the discrepancy between a blind *Fortuna* and a seeing *Fortuna* [i.e. Isis] might, after all, merely be a matter of perception. It is Lucius, who had been blind all along, eventually gains (in)sight through his conversion experience: only now he can see Isis' providential order behind what he previously would have considered random events. The story is thus more about a blind and seeing Lucius (and reader) than about a blind and seeing *Fortuna*.

[9] *De Academicis* I. i (1).

[10] Nancy Shumates (1996, p. 235) states: 'When the differences in how the narratives represent their crises as being experienced and acted out are accounted for, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Confessions* are very much alike

Inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.[12]

*Restless is our heart, until it finds rest in Thee.*

The word *cor* promises a very intimate account of Augustine's past.[13] *Confessiones* will reveal his true inner self, and this considerably differed from how he had publicly presented himself at the time. The word *nostrum* (instead of *meum*) implies that Augustine considered his inner restlessness to be the universal condition of (fallen) man:[14] his personal account becomes a story relevant to every reader. The first paragraph of *Confessiones* indicates that the work should be regarded as an extended prayer in praise of God, before a Christian audience.[15] Via this triadic structure (Augustine, the author – God – (Christian) reader) his spiritual autobiography has become 'an oath with God as witness'.[16] Its veracity seems assured.[17]

### 1.1.3. *Fortuna* Anathema for a Christian

Unlike Apuleius, Augustine had no intention whatsoever to avail himself of the pagan concept of *Fortuna* to narrate his conversion story before a Christian audience, not even as a

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indeed'. In her article 'The Augustinian Pursuit of False Values as a Conversion motif in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*' (*Phoenix* 42 (1988), 35-60), she convincingly argues that the two stories present the same process of disentanglement from a web of false values. The overall structure of *Confessiones* shows some similarities with that of *Metamorphoses*. Book XI (10 + 1), the last book of *Metamorphoses*, has a surprising content, since only then the reader becomes aware that he is actually reading a conversion story. Ten is, according to Pythagoras, a perfect number so that eleven (10 + 1) entails a new beginning. This is similar to Augustine's striking new start in his book 11 with a meditation on the first verses of *Genesis*. Augustine devotes three books to this new theme, which can be linked with the trinity, so that the structure of both works becomes even more analogous: (10 + 1) = (10 + 3). In this way the unusual number of eleven books of *Metamorphoses* and thirteen books of *Confessiones* can be explained (R. Martin, 'Apulée, Virgile, Augustin: Réflexions nouvelles sur la structure des *Confessions*', *Revue des études latines* 68 (1990), 136-150, especially pp. 138-141. He nevertheless remains cautious about such an interpretation).

[11] APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses* XI. 15; on the theme of peace in *Confessiones*, see G.P. Lawless, 'Interior Peace in the *Confessions*', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 26 (1980), 45-61.

[12] AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* I. i (1); See J.G. KRISTO, *Looking for God in Time and Memory, Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Augustine's Confessions* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), p. 21: 'There can be no doubt that Augustine poured out his soul into the statement at the beginning of his confession: "our hearts find no peace". He undertook the *Confessions* to prove *this* point'. Lucius will finally arrive in the "haven of peace" (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI. 15: '*You have been driven before the heavy storms and the heaviest gales of Fortuna, but you have finally reached the harbour of peace and the altar of mercy*'.

[13] P. Brown 2000, p. 163: 'The *Confessions* are, quite succinctly, the story of Augustine's heart'. Just how unique *Confessiones* was in its time is always a matter of debate. See for instance, J. Fontaine, 'Une révolution literaire dans l'occidant latin: Les *Confessions* de saint Augustin', in *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 88 (1987), 173-193; F. Young, '*The Confessions* of St. Augustine: What is the Genre of this Work?', *Augustinian Studies* 30 (1999), 1-16.

[14] G.B. Thompson, 'The Emerging Tension Between Self and Society, as Exemplified in Augustine', *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture* 25.1 (1990), 267-280 (p. 273): 'Private as it is, however, Augustine believes that his experience symbolizes the condition and consequent need of the entire human race'.

[15] *Conf.* X. iii (4) - iv (5) more clearly shows that Augustine wishes to address a Christian audience, because they possess Christian love. This brotherly love makes them believe he is not lying, and makes them accept him, despite his weaknesses.

[16] K.B. Steinhauser, 'Augustine's Autobiographical Covenant: A Contemporary Reading of His *Confessions*', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 18 (1991), 233-240 (p. 236).

[17] On the debate of the historicity of *Confessiones*, see, for instance, M. Lamberigts, 'Augustinus' *Confessiones*: Enkele beschouwingen', *Kleio* 23:1 (1993a), 24-46 (pp. 37-42).

mere stylistic figure. In *Retractationes* he expressed his regret having mentioned *Fortuna* so often in his early dialogues, even though he had made it clear that her so-called actions formed part of an all-embracing providential order.[18] He had discovered that people had the deplorable habit of saying: "*Fortuna* has willed this", instead of "God has willed this".[19] He also criticised the overall worldly style of his early dialogues.[20] He wished to distance himself more strongly from his traditional pagan legacy, especially after his ordination. *Confessiones* can be regarded as Augustine's proof that Christian rhetoric could be beautiful and persuasive in its own right.[21]

## 1.2. The Alternative: An All-Embracing Christian Divine Providence

### 1.2.1. Discerning Providential Order behind Blind *Fortuna*

From a literary point of view, God's providence has now taken over the function of binding together a selection of episodes from Augustine's past. H. Chadwick writes: 'Repeatedly in the *Confessions* Augustine stresses that what is to our human minds mere chance is not fortuitous at all. In retrospect a wise providence is discernibly at work'.[22] As a literary device, providence is much more demanding than blind *Fortuna*. Unlike events attributed to a whimsical *Fortuna*, one needs to point out the beneficial effect and meaningfulness of a certain incident to justify its place within God's all-embracing, just order. Revealing God's purpose behind seemingly random events becomes Augustine's obsession in *Confessiones*.

In his youth he had never doubted that God exercised a providential care over human affairs, though his belief was sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger.[23] Such a position is still far removed from accepting that the wisdom of the Christian God '*governs the world down to the leaves that tremble on trees*',[24] making sure that His salvation plan is being carried out

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[18] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (1); *Retractationes* I. i (2).
[19] AUGUSTINE, *Retractationes* I. i (2).
[20] *Conf.* IX. iv (7).
[21] Augustine was working simultaneously on his influential treatise *De doctrina christiana*. In book IV he promotes a Christian inspired rhetoric, based on Biblical and ecclesiastical writings. See the introduction (pp. xvii- xix) of R.P.H. Green (trans. & intr.), *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching* (Oxford World's Classics) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), and Carol Harrison 2001, pp. 68-78.
[22] H. Chadwick, 'On Re-reading the *Confessions*', in *Saint Augustine the Bishop: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Fannie Lemoine & Ch. Kleinhenz, Garland Medieval Casebooks 9 (New York & London, 1994), pp. 139-160 (p. 146); Nancy Shumate (1996, p. 235) talks about Augustine providing his conversion story with 'a retrospective structuring commentary'.
[23] *Conf.* VI. v (7)-(8).
[24] The quotation is taken from *Conf.* VII. vi (8). It recalls the discussion they had on the irregular sound of the water in *De ordine* I. iv (11).

through His hidden arrangement of even the smallest events. Augustine only came to believe in this kind of providence when he was a Christian convert.

### 1.2.2. Delight as the Source of Man's Actions and its Link with Chance

Augustine had recently gained deeper insight into the nature of human motivation. He understood that "delight'" was the only possible source of action.[25] What exactly delighted him at a particular moment in time, depended on what presented itself to him there and then, and this was usually outside his control. It made him realize how big an impact chance encounters (read: *Fortuna/ divine providence*) could actually have on man's actions. Augustine was at pains to demonstrate that God had ordered the external circumstances for every individual in such a way that His universal salvation plan would come to pass. The individual was "moved" to freely carry out a certain deed, because God in his grace presented him with exactly those stimuli needed to make him delight in the sought-after action. God knew what was required to elicit the required action, because He knew the most inner thoughts and feelings of each individual.[26] The basic idea that man depended on factors outside his control to determine himself shaped Augustine's thoughts on the relationship between God's grace and free will.[27]

### 1.2.3. The Crucial Voyage to Italy

#### 1. THREE REASONS FOR LEAVING

In *Confessiones* Augustine carefully considered what had made him decide to leave in AD 383 his teaching post at Carthage, and to cross the Mediterranean Sea to start teaching in Rome. He gives us an explanation on three levels.[28] In *De Academicis* he had given the "public" reason: worldly ambition drove him to Italy.[29] We find this also in *Confessiones*, where he presented it as his motive to his (Manichean) friends. They helped him to start up his new (private) teaching post at Rome. In *Confessiones* he also admits that, actually, there was a more personal (and embarrassing) reason behind his decision: he wanted to escape the difficulties he encountered in imposing discipline in his classroom at Carthage. He had

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[25] I am following here closely P. Brown 2000, pp. 148-149.
[26] This is emphasised in *Conf.* x. i (1) – ii (2). The fact that God knows each individual's inner self totally is very important to Augustine.
[27] P. Brown 2000, p. 376.
[28] B. Lowery, too, presents this episode as a typical example of the spiritual insights of the *Confessions*. He only focuses on 'two-track' reasons of the event (Augustine's personal reasons and God's salvific reasons) (B. Lowery, 'Providence in the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine', *Augustinian Heritage* 38 (1992), 99-108 (pp. 99-100). The third track is at least as important: what Augustine gave as reason to his surrounding for his departure to Rome.
[29] AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* II. ii (4).

heard that at Rome the students were better behaved. When he reflects upon this important decision in his life, Augustine now can see God's guiding hand behind both inducements which made him travel to Italy. It was crucial for him to leave Carthage, because God had planned that his conversion was going to happen in Italy. By taking into account Augustine's inner feelings, his (pretended?) worldly ambitions, his personal difficulties, and his Manichean connections, God had arranged the circumstances for Augustine in such a way that he would be irresistibly attracted by the idea to go to Italy:

> Carthagini stimulos quibus inde avellerer admovebas, et Romae inlecebras quibus attraherer proponebas mihi per homines qui diligunt vitam mortuam, [...] ad corrigendos gressus meos utebaris occulto et illorum et mea perversitate.
>
> *You applied the pricks which made me tear away from Carthage [i.e. his difficulties in teaching], and you put before me the attractions of Rome [i.e. better behaviour of students and greater riches and honours] to draw me there, using people who love a life of death [i.e. his Manichean friends]. [...] To correct my 'steps' you secretly made use of their and mine perversity.*

This is Augustine at his best, applying to his past life his recently obtained deeper insight into freely willed human action, with God still firmly exercising control over it. It is also one of the examples wherein he discerned God achieving his goal through the actions of people who were not at all aware of the providential role they were fulfilling, since they acted out of completely different motives.

### 2. Why God did not answer Monnica's prayer

In understanding external events within the context of a Christian good order, Augustine also needed to explain something else about his departure. A just and good God can be trusted not to refuse devout prayers of his subjects. Augustine's saintly mother Monnica, who continuously prayed for her son's (re-)conversion to Christianity, was desperately entreating God not to let her son go to Italy. Nevertheless, during the night, Augustine slipped away on a ship, and left. Now he also wishes to reflect upon the reason why God had decided in this case not to answer Monnica's prayers:

> Et in his altissimi tui recessus et praesentissima in nos misericordia tua cogitanda et praedicanda est[...] Cum et me cupiditatibus meis raperes ad finiendas ipsas cupiditates et illius carnale desiderium iusto dolorum flagello vapularet [...] nesciebat quid tu illi gaudiorum facturus esses de absentia mea.[30]
>
> *In this also Your most profound secrets and most ready mercy are proper matters for reflection and proclamation. [...] You were using my ambitious desires as a means towards putting an end to those desires, and the longing she [i.e. Monnica] felt for her own flesh and blood was justly chastised by the whip of sorrows.[...] She did not understand that You were to use my absence as a means of bringing her joy.*

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[30] *Conf.* V. vii (13) & V. viii (15).

God did not grant Monnica the fulfilment of this particular prayer in order to (justly) punish her deep worldly attachment to her son (*'As mothers do, she loved to have me with her, but much more than most mothers'*).[31] She did not know that God had His own secret ways in bringing about her son's conversion. The temporary separation (Monnica would join her son again in Milan) formed an integral part of His salvation plan. Unknowingly, she had been trying to obstruct God's providential plan to lead her son towards baptism by asking Him to keep her son with her in Africa.

### 3. AUGUSTINE'S PREDESTINATED RECOVERY AT ROME

Augustine's consistent exposure of God's hidden providence within his past could lead to striking findings. He attributed his recovery – having fallen seriously ill on his arrival at Rome – to the workings of God. During his illness, Augustine stayed at a Manichean friend's house, and had no desire whatsoever to be baptized even though he feared for his life.[32] If God had allowed him to die in such a state, He would have disregarded Monnica's tearful prayers to save her son's soul. Also her many encouraging visions concerning her son's faith would have proven to be deceptive. In retrospect, Augustine now realizes that he was certain to recover[33] because he was predestinated to be baptized,[34] and this certainly would not have come to pass in the house of his Manichean friend:

> Immo vero aderas et exaudiebas et faciebas ordine quo praedestinaveras esse faciendum.[35]
>
> *You were there and were hearing her petition, and were following through the order of events that You had predestinated.*

Her visions proved to be reliable revelations of God's salvation plan.

### 4. DRAWN TO AMBROSE IN MILAN AND OTHER PROVIDENTIAL ENCOUNTERS

The three levels of motivation (personal, public, and God's guidance) can also be discerned in Augustine's move from Rome to Milan the following year (AD 384). Again, the misbehaviour of his students proved to be an important personal spur to leave so soon his post at Rome. He still upheld towards his Manichean friends his worldly ambitions as incentive to leave Rome. He wished to seize the golden opportunity in Milan, where a new imperial appointment of the chair of rhetoric had been announced. This lucrative position had indeed become vacant at a most propitious moment for him. Augustine realized in

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[31] *Conf.* V. viii (15).
[32] *Conf.* V. ix (16).
[33] *Conf.* V. viii (15): '*You did not allow me to die in this sad condition of both body and soul*'.
[34] This would happen even during Monnica's lifetime. When she later joined Augustine, she told him she felt certain that Augustine would become a *fidelis* before she died (*Conf.* VI. i (1)).
[35] *Conf.* V. ix (17).

retrospect that this "stroke of luck", too, formed part of a providential plan to lure him away from Rome to Milan: it would bring him into contact with the renowned bishop Ambrose. He would play an instrumental role in Augustine's gradual acceptance of the truth of the Catholic faith.[36]

> Ad eum autem ducebar abs te nesciens, ut per eum ad te sciens ducerer.[37]
>
> *I was led to him [i.e. Ambrose] by You, unaware that through him, in full awareness, I might be led to You.*

Looking back, Augustine realizes God had providentially arranged also other important encounters in his life, such as with Faustus (who made him feel disappointed in Manicheism), Firminus (who helped him to reject astrology), the man puffed up with pride, who gave him the (Neo-)Platonic books, and the priest Simplicianus.[38] Unknowingly, they all contributed in their own way to his eventual conversion to Christianity.

### 1.2.4. A Puzzling Episode: Baptism Deferred

Some events inevitably proved more difficult to place within God's order. Augustine's remarkable creativity in perceiving God's purpose behind chance incidents had its limitations. At the heart of his eventual conversion to the Catholic faith in Milan stood his willingness to receive baptism, combined with his renunciation of sexual pleasures and worldly ambition. He recalls that as a young catechumen (he was perhaps eleven years old), he had shown a sincere, pious desire to be baptized after he had fallen seriously ill.[39] His devout mother was making the necessary preparations to meet his request, but when he suddenly recovered, she decided not to go through with it. She assumed that her son, during his adolescence, was likely to commit grave (sexual) transgressions, so that it was better to wait with the remissions of sins until after that period.[40] Augustine now believes that Monnica had been wrong to call off the baptism.[41] In this way she let him embark upon a morally stormy period of his life (*sc.* his adolescence) without the vital protection of this sacrament.[42]

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[36] Nevertheless, the influence on Augustine of other people from the Milanese milieu should not be underestimated (for instance the priest Simplicianus, Ponticianus, and the man who gave him the (Neo-)Platonic books).

[37] *Conf.* V. xiii (23); H. Chadwick (1994, pp. 145-146): 'He [i.e. Augustine] saw a mysterious hidden providence in the succession of events which brought him to Ambrose at Milan'.

[38] Respectively *Conf.* V. vii (13), *Conf.* VII. vi (8), *Conf.* VII. ix (13), and *Conf.* VIII. i (1).

[39] *Conf.* I. xi (17).

[40] *Conf.* I. xi (17).

[41] *Conf.* I. xi (18)).

[42] Augustine's decision to baptize his son Adeodatus at the age of fifteen, is a further indication that he thought his mother should not have let him go unaided through morally dangerous times.

Something bothers Augustine about this episode. He wonders why God did not grant him his sincere wish to be baptized, and instead allowed His maidservant Monnica to halt the preparations when she saw him recovering.[43] Significantly, Augustine does not think his recovery should be attributed to God, probably because it actually prevented him from becoming a *fidelis*.[44] What good, he wonders, could there have been in putting off his baptism? God could have easily brought about what he so whole-heartedly had asked for.[45] 'Vellem scire, si tu etiam velles' ('*I would wish to know, if you would also wish me to know*'), he says. He recognizes that, ultimately, his knowledge of God's hidden providence ultimately depended on Him. Thus far, God apparently did not wish to reveal to Augustine His reasons for having allowed his baptism to be deferred.[46]

### 1.2.5. God's Grace Needed to Break the Bonds of *Consuetudo*

Minor conversion experiences taken from the lives of Alypius and Monnica function, as it were, as the side-panels of the grand tableau depicting Augustine's conversion.[47] Augustine selected those incidents which substantiated his belief that we all need divine grace to break away from a sinful habit (*consuetudo*): our own resources simply do not suffice.[48] Often this divine aid comes in the form of apparently trifling "chance" occurrences. They nevertheless have a dramatic impact on people's lives, making them suddenly turn towards the better in life. This is a more advanced rendering of Augustine's position in his early dialogues:

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[43] '*What was Your purpose when at that time it was decided to defer my baptism?*' In his article 'Monnica's Baptism, Augustine's Deferred Baptism, and Patricius' (*Augustinian Studies* 29:2 (1998) 1-17), D. Wright discusses the different views on this passage. Some think Augustine is blaming his mother Monnica, while Marsha L. Dutton thinks that 'when Monica resisted his youthful desire for baptism she may unknowingly have been acting as God's agent'. (quoted from p. 14).

[44] *Conf.* I. xi (17).

[45] For instance, he could have arranged the development of his illness in such a way that he remained ill somewhat longer, so that he would be baptized before he recovered. This was after all what happened to his closest friend in Thagaste (*Conf.* IV. iv (8)). There the sequence of events made sure he was saved. First he became so seriously ill that, while he was unconscious, his Christian parents baptised him, even though he was a Manichee. He recovered, but a few days later he died. Also here Augustine can see God's wise procedure: '*He was snatched away from my lunacy [Augustine planned to reconvert him to Manicheism], so that he might be preserved with You for my consolation*'.

[46] D. Wright 1998, p. 14. For the correct interpretation of the Latin, he refers to J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 71 and *BA* 13, p. 305 n. 1.

[47] F. Van Fleteren lists in his article 'St. Augustine's Theory of Conversion', in *Augustine: Second Founder of the Faith*, Collectanea Augustiniana 1, ed. by J.C. Schaubelt and F. Van Fleteren (New York: Lang, 1990), pp. 65-80), no less than eleven conversion experiences apart from Augustine's conversion to the Catholic faith. He persuasively argues that they have many elements in common, so that a real *Formgeschichte* of conversion can be discerned (p. 73). One of its elements is the chance nature of events leading up to conversion (p. 67). Needless to say, this will be the focus in the present discussion of two conversion stories in *Confessiones*.

[48] See also P. Brown (2000, p. 168), who refers to Monnica's drinking habit, and Alypius' unsatisfactory experience of sex, as demonstrations that a change in the force of habit could only happen through processes entirely outside one's control.

contrary to what Cicero may uphold, we need the help of "*Fortuna*" in order to reach the happy life.

### 1. A "CONVERSION EXPERIENCE" OF ALYPIUS: THE CIRCUS GAMES

In *Confessiones*, Augustine tells the story that he unknowingly cured Alypius from his infatuation with the circus games. Alypius happened to be attending Augustine's lecture - even though his father had forbidden him to go to his classes - in which he was bitingly sarcastic about those captivated by circus games. Alypius thought that Augustine was specifically targeting him with his criticism, and he subsequently decided to change his ways. Actually, Augustine was not thinking at all of rescuing Alypius, although in the past he had been worried about his obsession (for worldly reasons).[49] He merely used the example of the circus games in his lecture because he thought it was a suitable way to clarify the text he was discussing in class. He now can see God's great design in this incident:

> Domine, tu, qui praesides gubernaculis omnium quae creasti [...] utens tu omnibus et scientibus et nescientibus ordine quo nosti (et ille ordo iustus est).
>
> *Lord, You preside over the government of everything which You have created, [....] You use all, both aware of it and those unaware of it, in the order which You know – and that order is just.*[50]

Later, Alypius will become again infatuated with the circus games. Out of curiosity he could not keep his eyes closed in the circus, to which his companions had dragged him, when he heard a big roar from the audience. The moment he saw what was happening, he became again addicted to the games. Augustine inserts this sequel to show that one's own strength is not enough to resist temptation: one needs the help of God.[51] He also suggests in *Confessiones* that Alypius, too, became captivated by sexual pleasures.[52] But this proves to be merely an assumption, not a fact.[53] Again, he was (too?) keen to make the point that continence can only be obtained through God's assistance.[54]

A letter of the correspondence between Augustine, Alypius and Paulinus of Nola is often referred to in relation to Augustine's motivation to compose *Confessiones*.[55] Paulinus had asked Alypius in an earlier letter to write him how he had come to the Catholic faith. In the end, it was Augustine who took up this task. He writes to Paulinus:

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[49] *Conf.* V. vii (11).
[50] *Conf.* VI. vii (12).
[51] *Conf.* VI. vii (13).
[52] *Conf.* VI. xii (22).
[53] Commentators nevertheless too easily draw the conclusion that Alypius was already hopelessly infatuated with sex (for instance C. Starnes (1990, pp. 158-159): 'By his thoughtless flirting with a danger he did not have to face, he himself was caught by the same lust which held Augustine').
[54] This belief made him also understand the Manichean show of continence
[55] P. Courcelle 1950, pp. 31-32, discussed by J.J. O'Donnell, II, pp. 360-361.

> Cito ergo, si Dominus adiuuerit, totum Alypium inseram praecordiis tuis; nam hoc sum ego maxime ueritus, ne ille uereretur aperire omnia, quae in eum Dominus contulit, ne alicui minus intellegenti - non enim abs te solo illa legerentur - non diuina munera concessa hominibus, sed se ipsum praedicare uideretur.[56]
>
> *Soon with God's help, I shall put all of Alypius in your heart. What really worries me is that he would be afraid to reveal everything the Lord has done for him, in case a less intelligent reader – for such things would not be read by you alone – should take it not as God's gifts to humankind, but Alypius boasting about himself.*

This indicates that around AD 396 Alypius still appears to have been not overtly mindful of God's continual, overwhelming gift of grace in his life. His considerable inner moral strength made him less inclined to consistently perceive God's part in his virtuous deeds. This ignorance brings back to mind the initial difference that existed between the two friends. In *De Academicis*, Alypius believed, unlike Augustine, that the help of *Fortuna* was not necessary in order to become wise. With the selection of episodes taken from Alypius' life, Augustine wished to illustrate in *Confessiones* that his dear friend depended as much as he did on divine aid to lead an exemplary life.

### 2. A "CONVERSION EXPERIENCE" OF MONNICA: WINE-BIBBING

Augustine also picked out an episode from Monnica's life, wherein he recounted how she managed to overcome her wine drinking habit.[57] Augustine particularly chose this incident from Monnica's life, because it 'conforms to a pattern which he sees recurring both in his own life and in the lives of many of his friends':[58] the misuse of the will, which leads to *consuetudo*, can only be remedied by divine intervention.[59]

God arranged in his rescue plan the events in such a way, that the harsh words of a slavegirl (she called Monnica "a boozer") would engender in Monnica such great feelings of shame and guilt that she was able to break loose from the chains of her drinking habit.

This is a fine example of God bringing good (Monnica giving up drinking) out of evil (the slavegirl's nasty insult), illustrating once again that everything, even the most trivial details in life, is governed by God, and has a place within His just order.[60]

Margaret M. O'Ferrall links Augustine's belief that one is in need for divine aid to heal a *consuetudo*, with his theory on *Fortuna* expounded in the Cassiciacum dialogues.[61] Indeed, in the preface of *De beata vita*, and we may add, also at the beginning of each book of *De*

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[56] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* XXVII.5, quoted from Gillian Clark, *Augustine: The Confessions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 41. Notice that he relies on God's assistance in writing the story.
[57] *Conf.* IX. viii (17) - (18).
[58] Margaret M. O'Ferrall, 'Monica: A Reconsideration', *Recherches augustiniennes* 10 (1975), 23-43 (p. 30).
[59] Margaret M. O'Ferrall 1975, p. 29.
[60] *Conf.* IX. viii (18): *'You Lord, ruler of heaven and earth, turn to Your purposes the deep torrents. You order the turbulent flux of centuries, even from the fury of one soul You brought healing to another'.*
[61] Margaret M. O'Ferrall 1975, p. 30.

*Academicis*,[62] Augustine has expressed his conviction that *virtus* in itself cannot be sufficient to break the chains (of habit) that keep people from reaching the (Christian) haven of philosophy, where the happy life resides: "propulsion from an outside source" is required. Augustine believed that such a decisive spur was not instigated by the meaningless and random behaviour of *Fortuna*, but arranged by the unseen helping hand of God in his providence.[63]

### 1.2.6. The Role of Augustine's Sudden Illness in his Conversion

In the Cassiciacum dialogues Augustine regarded his ill-health to be the vital divine aid which enabled him to embark upon his Christian inspired *otium honestum* (towards the middle of October AD 386). Those who had read the dialogues would have expected *Confessiones* to culminate in the moment his chest pains suddenly forced him to resign, with Augustine once again exposing God's guiding hand behind this sudden "misfortune". He certainly mentions his illness (breathing difficulties),[64] but it is completely stripped of its providential character and significance. We now learn the true circumstances of his sudden resignation. His illness had been worrying him throughout the summer. Some time after his conversion moment (end of August AD 386), wherein he also made the decision to resign from his post, he thought that his breathing difficulties would come in handy to give a less criticisable reason for his planned resignation. He now had a genuine excuse (and valid reason) to make him less vulnerable to condemnation from those who wished him to remain in his post. He was very much aware that his decision to retire prematurely was likely to stir up ill-feeling among the parents of his students, his colleagues,[65] and some of his friends.[66]

> Sed ubi plena voluntas vacandi et videndi quoniam tu es dominus oborta mihi est atque firmata (nosti, deus meus), etiam gaudere coepi quod haec quoque suberat non mendax excusatio, quae offensionem hominum temperaret, qui propter liberos suos me liberum esse numquam volebant.

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[62] J.J. O'Meara in his excellent introduction of the Penguin translation of *De civitate Dei*, also makes this link (pp. xv-xix). He sees also a connection with *De civitate Dei*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

[63] I am following here closely the words of Margaret More O' Ferrall (1975, p. 30). F. van Fleteren (1990, p. 67) witnesses the important role of chance in many other conversion stories of *Confessiones*. The vagueness in description of these chance events further enhances the importance of the workings of divine providence and grace.

[64] *Conf.* IX. ii (4).

[65] H. Chadwick 1994, p. 151, referring to Conf. i. xiii (22).

[66] L.C. Ferrari thinks that Augustine feared (like Victorinus) the enmity of the pagan faction in Rome, since they had brought him his appointment, so that he would be regarded a 'treacherous turncoat' (L.C. Ferrari, 'Background to Augustine's "City of God"', *Classical Journal* 67 (1971), 198-208 (pp. 203-204 n. 13). This seems highly unlikely: a year later he did not mind to stay for a lengthy period in Rome, while he surely must have been more afraid of the reaction coming from his immediate surrounding.

> *But when a total intention to be at leisure and see that you are God was born in me and had become quite firm (that you knew, my God)', I also began to be pleased that my indisposition was a genuine excuse which softened the irritation felt by people who, being concerned for the education of their sons, were unwilling that I should ever be free'.*

With "*nosti, deus meus*" Augustine stresses that even before he thought of using his chest pains as an excuse to resign, he already had made up his mind to leave his job. Even if he had not fallen ill, he would still have resigned at the end of the Vintage vacation. It was not the first time he publicly feigned a reason for leaving his teaching position.[67]

Augustine's "first confessions" in the early dialogues[68] could therefore best be regarded as the public version of the facts, built around the formal reason (read: excuse) of his resignation at the end of the Vintage Vacation.[69] *Confessiones*, on the other hand, reveals Augustine's innermost thoughts and feelings,[70] and these often differed from how he had wished to present himself publicly, even before his friends. J.J. O'Donnell points out that

> the dialogues were dedicated to some of his Milanese friends; but it was just to those friends to whom Augustine regrets having given [in these early works] a disingenuous explanation for his retirement.[71]

It also emerges that he thought that not so much his public career, but his infatuation with sexual pleasure (which is more of a private matter) had been the strongest chain of habit that kept him from converting.[72] The renunciation of both of them came nevertheless in one decisive resolution.[73] His deeper insight into the nature of human motivation[74] made him focus on the actual moment (late August AD 386) he renounced his sexual pleasures and worldly ambition, and freely submitted to the Catholic Church. The delayed execution of his resolve, i.e. resigning from his post at the beginning of October AD 386, and breaking off his marriage engagement (after his resignation?) inevitably receded thereby into the

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[67] For instance, he did not dare to give his friends the true reason for going to Rome, and later to Milan. Understandably, he did not like to disclose the more embarrassing personal motivation ("he was a failure in *the classroom*"), and therefore feigned a more acceptable reason (worldly ambition).

[68] Thus called by P. Courcelle in his article 'Les premières *Confessions* de saint Augustin', *Revue des études latines*, 22 (1945), 155-174.

[69] Without accusing Augustine of dishonesty every time he mentioned his ill-health in the dialogues, he must have known that such references would make his official reason more genuine, even though it had been, after all, a mere excuse.

[70] *Conf.* X. iii (4).

[71] J.J. O'Donnell 1985, p. 93. He is however too magnanimous towards Augustine, when he states that 'a full decade had to pass before he could devise the literary means, in the *Confessions*, to speak of his most private experiences without pose or brag' (p. 93). Not humility kept him from telling the full truth in the dialogues. He still must have found it too embarrassing and too disadvantageous for him having to confess that his ill-health had actually been merely an excuse to hand in his resignation in order to avoid public resentment against his early retirement from public life.

[72] Another possible explanation for this shift in emphasis is that Augustine was thrown back into public life since his ordination. Stressing God's help in retreating from his worldly life, becomes more odd, if five years later, God had allowed Augustine to be forced into public life again as a presbyter.

[73] *Conf.* VIII. xii (30): '*I did not now seek a wife and had no ambition for success in the world*'.

[74] P. Brown 2000, pp. 148-149.

background.[75] Concentrating on the decision itself does not alter the fact that God's helping hand was crucial in this conversion moment, which involved breaking the chains that tied him to a worldly life, in this case sexual desire and worldly success.[76]

# 2. A Garden of Milan: Where Chance Turns into Grace

The element of (ostensible) chance played such a crucial role in Augustine's conversion hour that one could argue that its defining moment revolved around his willingness to see the Christian God's helping hand behind what he previously would have considered a meaningless coincidence. It heralded the final break with (Neo-)Platonic Wisdom in favour of Christian faith, and the change of allegiance from pagan to Christian ideology. Only in retrospect did Augustine discern divine providence at work in the events leading up to that crucial moment in a Milanese garden. Simplicianus, nor Ponticianus focused on God's providential role in their conversion stories. Instead, they preferred to highlight the heroism involved in taking such a courageous decision.[77] It was in the garden of Milan that Augustine would witness for the first time God's saving grace in, what must have seemed from the outside, a trifling incident.

## 2.1. Augustine's Dilemma before the Visit of Ponticianus

### 2.1.1. Intellectual breakthrough

The (Neo-)Platonic books had put an end to Augustine's brief period of scepticism, during which he had despaired of ever finding the truth.[78] It gave a tremendous boost to his

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[75] The dismissal of his second concubine presumably happened immediately after his conversion. H. Chadwick (1994, p. 151) is one of the few who reflects upon the consequences of the family of Augustine's fiancée: 'The decision in Verecundus' [?] garden at Milan in July 386 was to abandon his pursuit of a secular career financed by his bride's dowry – a reversal of intention which would have made him a very unattractive son-in-law in the eyes of his fiancée's parents' (We do not know whether the house Augustine was staying in belonged to Verecundus, while I have proposed a conversion date as late as the end of August instead of July, because the *vindemiales feriae* (Vintage Vacation: 23 August to 15 October for the year AD 386) probably started later in the North of Italy (mid September?).

[76] See *Conf.* VIII. vi (13).

[77] The role of providence is strikingly absent in these stories, while one would expect Augustine to have enlarged upon it. I assume that this is because both Simplicianus and Ponticianus presented their stories in the traditional way, i.e. wherein the heroism was being stressed, and that Augustine wished to remain faithful to their representation. Whatever small hints there are of God's role, they were probably afterwards added by Augustine as a comment.

[78] *Conf.* I. i (1).

aspirations to devote his life entirely to philosophy.[79] He was admonished to return into himself,[80] and throughout his life, Augustine would be captivated by this search of his inner self. He succeeded in a (Neo-)Platonically inspired ascent, and obtained a momentary vision of God, which overwhelmed him.[81]

His rigorous self-investigation confronted him with a great inner restlessness, which had made the vision of God so transient. He thought that above all the weight of his *consuetudo carnalis* - sometimes translated into "sexual habit", but, as will become clear later on, to be understood in a much broader sense - was responsible for him lacking the necessary serenity to enjoy God more permanently.[82] It was the strongest uncontrollable force pulling him down into inferior things.

The (Neo-)Platonists commended self-purification as the way to obtain inner tranquillity. They believed, just as Cicero did,[83] that one could (and ought to) be one's own doctor. Augustine's inability to control his sexual lust[84] may have contributed to a growing frustration in pursuing the (Neo-)Platonic way of self-purification. In those moments of despair, he must have wondered whether he would ever obtain the immense tranquillity of a Plotinus.[85]

The (Neo-)Platonic concepts of a transcendent God and of evil as non-being helped to remove Augustine's final intellectual objections against Christian teaching. The God he encountered during his (Neo-)Platonic ascent, he believed to be the same as the Christian God of Scripture. He began to study the Pauline epistles, and read them with the eyes of a (Neo-)Platonic philosopher,[86] looking for a way to hold on to his briefly obtained vision of God. They made a profound impression on Augustine.[87] He explicitly states he found in Paul's writings the same wisdom as in the (Neo-)Platonist books.[88] Yet, instead of encountering "a gospel of self-reliance", the reader was urged to submit himself totally to

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[79] *De Academicis* II. ii (6).
[80] *Conf.* VII. x (16).
[81] *Conf.* VII. xvii (23).
[82] *Conf.* VII. xvii (23).
[83] CICERO, *Tusculan Disputations* III. iii (6).
[84] *Conf.* VI. xi (20): 'et propriarum virium credebam esse continentiam, quarum mihi non eram conscius' '*I believed continence to be achieved by personal resources which I was not aware of possessing*'. When his consort was dismissed 'because she was a hindrance to his marriage', she vowed to live the rest of her life in chastity, while Augustine immediately took in another concubine to satisfy his sexual lust until his arranged career marriage with an aristocratic girl (*Conf.* VI. xiv. (24)).
[85] P. Brown 2000, p. 96: 'Augustine, however, would never be another Plotinus; perhaps he lacked the massive tranquillity of the great pagan'.
[86] Ch. Boyer (*Christianisme et neo-platonisme dans la formation de saint Augustin* (Paris: 1920)) concluded that Augustine did not so much read Christianity with (Neo-)Platonic eyes, but rather did he understand (Neo-)Platonism with Christian eyes (M. Lamberigts 1993, p. 38). Both processes are likely to have been involved.
[87] *Conf.* VII. xxi (27); *De Academicis* II. ii (5-6).
[88] *Conf.* VII. xxi (27): '*All the truth I had read in the (Neo-)Platonists was stated there [i.e. Paul's writings]*'. This seems an indication that (Neo-)Platonism was very much in his mind when he studied the Bible.

Christ, because He alone could bring healing.[89] Paul also seemed more sympathetic towards Augustine's intense inner restlessness and the disparity within his soul. Augustine must have recognized his own weak condition especially in the apostle's description of '*the great divide between God's law in the inner man, and the other law in his members fighting against the law of his mind*'.[90]

## 2.1.2. Finding his Niche in Church

Augustine was now convinced that his place was within the Catholic Church, though it did not immediately inspire him to seek baptism.[91] He may well have considered the divine revelations in the Bible to be a valuable supplementary aid to find wisdom.[92] Embracing a Christian tinged (Neo-)Platonism whilst preserving 'complete spiritual autonomy' remained to him an attractive option in AD 386.[93] In this way, he could steer clear of a radical (and, from a philosopher's point of view, humiliating) submission to the authority of the Church and to its sacraments.[94] In a revealing passage in *Confessiones* Augustine believed that, in His providence, God had wanted him to study the (Neo-)Platonist books before he came to study the Bible.[95] If it had been in the reversed order, he might have abandoned the Catholic faith, or at least thought that the same ideas could be gained from reading only (Neo-)Platonic books!

Meanwhile, Augustine was heading towards a crucial juncture in his worldly life due to his impending marriage - his fiancée being more than a year under the legal age of marriage (which was set at twelve years).[96] He had mixed feelings about this step, but in the end complied because of social pressure. His mother thought that marriage would make

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[89] *Conf.* VII. xxi (27). See also, for instance, X. iii (3), where God is 'medicus meus intime' ('*Physician of my most intimate self*'.

[90] Romans 7: 22-3, quoted in *Conf.* VII. xxi (27). As J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 479) puts it: 'Augustine here sounds like a man who has read this passage [*Enneads* I.2.5, which is Plotinus' description of self-purification] and despairs of achieving the calm it depicts. To him, Paul in *Romans* [7] has the more compelling description of the state of his soul, and offers help from outside that Plotinus did not have [i.e. divine grace]'.

[91] Nothing suggests that at this stage Augustine was already convinced of the necessity of baptism. *Conf.* VI. xiii (23) mentions that Monnica found Augustine more and more prepared to consider it. This is the last time we hear of Augustine's attitude towards this ritual until it actually became part of his resolution at his conversion. J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 378) rightly points out: 'He says nothing here of how he felt about baptism'.

[92] *Conf.* VI. v (8).

[93] P. Brown 2000, p. 96. What Augustine liked the most in Cicero's exhortation to philosophy, was '*the advice not to study one particular sect but to love and seek and pursue and hold fast and strongly embrace wisdom itself, wherever found*' (*Conf.* III. iv (8)).

[94] Equally telling is Augustine realizing how difficult it is to persuade proud (Neo-)Platonists to submit to the truth (read: Christ being God incarnated), and to accept the yoke of the Catholic faith (AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* X. 19).

[95] *Conf.* VII. xx (26).

[96] *Conf.* VI. xiii (23).

Augustine more fit for baptism,[97] while presumably she still held high worldly hopes for her son. Also his dependents must have encouraged him to embark upon a lucrative (career-)marriage, since they could profit from his further worldly success.

Augustine was nevertheless reluctant to bind himself to a wife at this stage.[98] He feared that his forthcoming marriage would be detrimental to achieving the required inner stability.[99] He knew that married life brought along further obligations, which he had to put up with against his will, leaving him inconstant in many other areas of his life.[100] Also his projected ideal life in philosophy with his friends was in jeopardy if he married.[101] The chaste Alypius had already tried to dissuade him from marrying because he was convinced that this would mean the end of their dream to '*live together in carefree leisure for the love of wisdom*'.[102] Both he and Nebridius had decided many years before upon leading a chaste life, presumably out of philosophical, but also Manichean, considerations. Nebridius in particular was keen to devote his life to the search for wisdom.[103]

Although Augustine had now become convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith, there remained many options open within the church. Paul recommended celibacy, but he did not forbid marriage, and this considerably differed from Manichean belief.[104] He could, for instance, choose to follow the example of Ponticianus, who was a baptized member of the Church, probably married, and holding an important position at the court.[105] This must have been the kind of life Monnica hoped he would soon adopt. Augustine, on the other

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[97] J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 378) states that 'baptism was probably part of the marriage bargain with the distinguished catholic family'. This seems to me going too far. The fact that Augustine was a catechumen, and regularly attending Ambrose's Church, was probably enough for the aristocratic family to regard him a suitable son-in-law. See, for instance, C. Starnes (1992, p. 166, n. 104) for a more moderate view: 'Monnica's hope would thus have the definite sense that a Christian wife could do for her son what she had been able to do for Patricius – i.e., bring him to baptism'.

[98] Perhaps in this context it is more understandable that Augustine was consulting Monnica, that she might find out through her visionary talents, what was going to happen with his life after his coming marriage (VI. xiii (23)).

[99] *Conf.* VIII. ii (2); see also *Soliloquia* I. x (17): 'Nihil esse sentio, quod magis ex arce deiciat animum virilem, quam blandimenta feminea coporumque ille conctatus, sine quo uxor haberi non potest' ('*I feel that there is nothing which strips the mind of its defences so much as feminine blandishments and the physical contact which is of the essence of living with a wife*').

[100] *Conf.* VIII. ii (2).

[101] It now emerges that Augustine's project to start an Epicurean styled community with his friends devoted to the study of philosophy failed not so much because they were not enthusiastic enough for it, but because of the likely opposition of '*mulierculae*' (literally: "the little women") (*Conf.* VI. xiv (24)), who would not be impressed with what their husbands (or future husbands) were planning to do. Also *Soliloquia* I. x (17) indirectly implies that Augustine could not expect his wife to be pleased about his plans to start such a philosophical community: '*Suppose it were certain that all those whom you wish to live with you at leisure in one place could be provided for through her [i.e. Augustine's ideal wife] ample wealth, and she herself would be even whole-heartedly in favour of that...*'.

[102] *Conf.* VI. xii (21).

[103] See *Conf.* VI. vii (12) for Alypius' admiration of the Manichean show of continence. For Nebridius' chastity, see *Conf.* IV. iii (6), and for his philosophical interest, see VI. x (17) and VIII. vi (13).

[104] *Conf.* VIII. ii (2); see H. Chadwick 1992, p. 133, n. 2: 'The [Catholic] Church included both married and unmarried believers (a marked difference from Manicheism)'.

[105] *Conf.* VIII. vi (14).

hand, was more attracted to the leisured philosophical life the distinguished and cultivated Manlius Theodorus was enjoying since AD 383, after a successful career at the court.[106] Like Augustine, he was merely a catechumen in the Catholic Church (and thus not a *fidelis*, a baptized member), deeply engaged in (Neo-)Platonism, and renowned for his eloquence. Manlius Theodorus was also someone who managed to combine the married state with dedicating himself to the study of wisdom.[107] There was further also the exemplary life of bishop Ambrose, whose worldly position Augustine admired, but whose celibacy he thought too difficult to imitate.[108]

***DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIFE IN CHURCH***

| **Ponticianus** | **Manlius Theodorus** | **Ambrose** |
|---|---|---|
| - high position at court | - dignified carefree leisure, devoted to philosophy | - high position in Church |
| - married(?) | - married | - celibate |
| - *fidelis* | - catechumen | - *fidelis* |
| *Monnica's preference* | *Augustine's preference (but issue of marriage)* | |

During a private consultation Augustine sought advice from the old priest Simplicianus on the issue which kind of life was suitable in his situation within the Catholic Church, especially in view of his impending marriage.[109] He recommended Augustine, above all, to seek baptism, implying that (Neo-)Platonic Wisdom alone would not lead to salvation.[110]

## 2.2 The Importance of Ponticianus' Story

### 2.2.1. The Discovery of Monasticism

When later the high official Ponticianus paid Augustine a surprise visit at his lodging-house in Milan, he unknowingly initiated the inner crisis out of which Augustine would emerge as an ascetic Christian willing to be baptized. Ponticianus discovered by chance a codex of Paul's epistles lying on a gaming table, and he began talking about the extraordinary life of

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[106] On (Flavius) Manlius Theodorus, see A. Solignac 1992 (*BA* 14), pp. 533-534; P. Courcelle 1950, pp. 153-156.

[107] See *Conf.* VI. xi (19). It is usually assumed that Manlius Theodorus was one of those '*many great men entirely worthy of imitation who combined the married state with a dedication to the study of wisdom*'.

[108] *Conf.* VI. iii (3).

[109] *Conf.* VIII. i (2).

[110] See *Appendix F* for the different interpretations of this episode, and a defence of the view taken here.

Antony, father-founder of the monks. To his amazement, Augustine and Alypius admitted they had never heard of this famous, holy man, and he therefore dwelt further on him. He told them, among other things, how Antony was converted when by chance he heard during a Church service the Matthew verse (19: 21) 'vade, vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus et habebis thesaurum in caelis; et veni, sequere me' ('*Go, sell all you have, give it to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me*').[111] Antony promptly took this as an admonition addressed to himself. Then, Ponticianus moved on to the many admirable men living in monasteries, even in Milan, who devoted themselves totally to God, having renounced their worldly life.[112] For the first time, Augustine was confronted with an organized contemplative way of life, firmly established within the orthodox faith and the Catholic Church, which could really appeal to him.[113] It answered to the highest moral demands of a life devoted to philosophy, and could make real his dream to set up a community of likeminded friends devoted to the study of wisdom.[114] Ponticianus had given him unknowingly the last piece of information to radically transform his life. At last he had discovered the kind of life fitting for him within the Catholic Church: the perfect life of an ascetic *fidelis*, who would serve God by devoting himself completely to the search for Wisdom in a small community.[115] However, taking such a step still required immense sacrifices.

### 2.2.2. The Heroic Conversion of Two Courtiers in a Garden of Trier

During their conversation, Ponticianus also talked about two courtiers who at once decided to abandon their worldly career and to break off their impending marriage after chancing

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[111] Conf. VIII. xii (29).

[112] *Conf.* VIII. vi (15).

[113] *Conf.* VIII. vi (15): 'in fide et catholica ecclesia' J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 39): 'i.e. holding the correct doctrines and engaged in the common cult'. That Augustine emphasises the orthodoxy of this way of life, shows that for the first time he encountered a way of life within the confines of the Catholic Church that resembled the life he always had wanted to live with his friends. The fact that Simplicianus did not mention the monastic way of life is a further argument that Augustine had not really raised the issue of marriage and his desire to withdraw from public life during their conversation (see Appendix F).

[114] C. Starnes (1990, pp. 224-225) states the same. However, he does not, I believe, sufficiently emphasize the philosophical attraction of a monastic way of life to Augustine, who all too eagerly interpreted "entire devotion to God" as a total commitment to the study of (Christian) Wisdom. Only then perhaps, is it also explicable why Augustine had no intention to join one of the existing monasteries, but preferred to establish his own informal version under the ecclesiastical umbrella of *servi Dei*. P. Brown (2000, p. 99) calls the ideal of philosophical retirement 'as stringent as any call to the monastic life'.

[115] In *Conf.* VIII. vii (17), Augustine reflects on the day when he heard Cicero say that even the mere search for wisdom should be preferred even to the discovery of treasures (riches), and to ruling over nations (honour, political power) and to the physical delights available at a nod (sexual pleasures). Since this passage follows the story of Ponticianus, it is clear that Augustine saw monasticism from the perspective of the ideal philosophical life he since long had wanted to embrace.

upon a book on the life of Antony in a garden of Trier.[116] Instead of striving to become a "*Friend of the emperor*" (amicus imperatoris), a position fraught with dangers, they learned that in an instant they could become a friend of God (amicus Dei). At once they made up their mind to cut loose the chains of worldly ambition.[117] They also resolved to break off their engagement. When later their fiancées heard what had happened, they too, decided upon embracing a life of continence. This was exactly the kind of decision Augustine knew he had to take in order to make his ideal of the happy life real, but was he as strong-willed as these men to do so? Their exemplary decision - "selling everything" in order to fully serve God – confronted Augustine in the starkest terms with his own weakness. The fact that these two men were uncultured hurt his pride even more.[118] When Ponticianus left the house, Augustine started accusing himself before Alypius for being so spineless in comparison with these two courtiers.[119] For so long they had been contemplating to turn their back on worldly ambition and to devote their lives to the search of Wisdom, but thus far this had been mere words without any firm action. Augustine's eventual conversion in the garden of Milan should indeed be regarded as a conversion not simply to Christianity, but to a Christian monastic way of life with philosophical overtones.[120] At the time, serving God (or enjoying God) had for Augustine a deep philosophical resonance.[121] It was after all his search for wisdom that had led him back to the religion of his childhood.

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116 Thi story is told in *Conf.* VIII. vi (15).

117 *Conf.* VIII. vi (15): '*I have broken away from our ambition, and have decided to serve God*'.

118 *Conf.* VIII. viii (19); H.M. Gatt ('Augustine's March to Peace and Happiness', *Augustinian Panorama* 1 (1984), 1-25 (p. 20)) comments: 'We note that even here a touch of Augustine's pride emerges for "they [i.e. the uncultured men] have gone before us"'.

119 *Conf.* VIII. viii (19).

120 E. A. Matter, 'Conversion(s) in the *Confessiones*', in *Augustine: Second Founder of the Faith,* Collectanea augustiniana 1 (ed. J.C. Schnaubelt and F. van Fleteren) (New York: Lang, 1990), pp. 21-28 (p. 25): 'It seems that the *conversio* described here is closer to the choice of monastic life recorded in the medieval Latin dictionary of Du Cange than the theories of A.D. Nock'. See also G. Madec, 'La conversion d'Augustin: Intériorité et communauté', in *Petites études augustiniennes* (Paris, Études augustiniennes 1994), pp. 91-103 (p. 100), and J.G. Kristo, *Looking for God in Time and Memory, Philosophy, Theology, and Spirituality in Augustine's Confessions* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), p. 34.

121 Serving God should, I believe, be closely connected with searching for Wisdom in Augustine's mind at the time. His acceptance that Christ was Wisdom allows for establishing such a close link. In *Conf.* VIII. vii (17), he states that, although he came to despise earthly success, he put off giving time to the quest for wisdom. Already then he thought he should embrace a life of chastity. When he says that he had long been disposed to serving God (VIII. x (22)), this may well refer to his willingness to live the life of a philosopher, tinged with Christian truth, without really having to submit himself to the Catholic faith.

## 2.3. The (All Too) Famous Conversion Scene

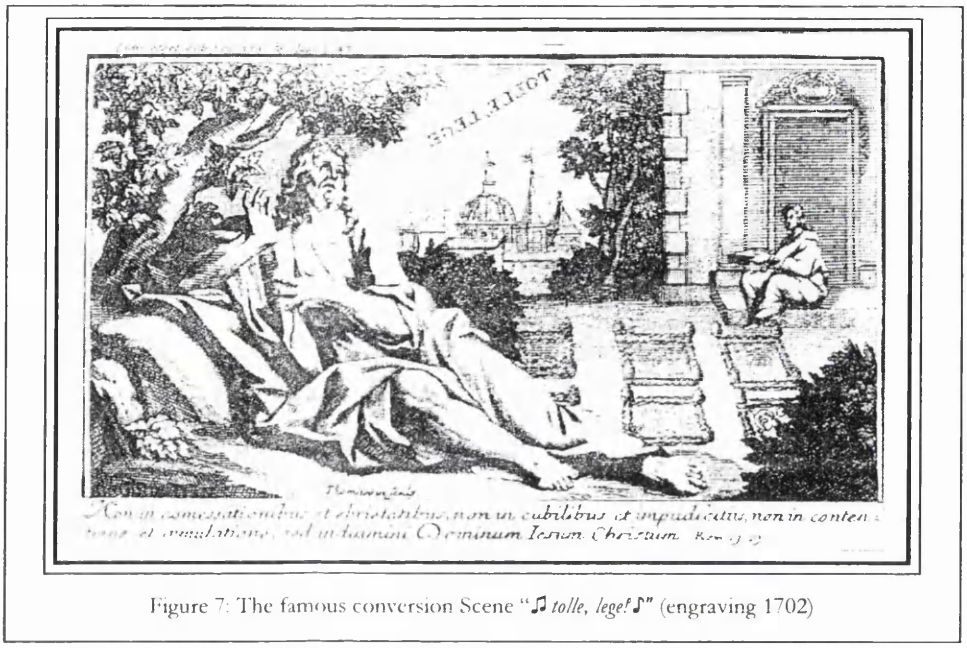


Figure 7: The famous conversion Scene "♫ *tolle, lege!*♪" (engraving 1702)

### 2.3.1. Fiction?

Impelled to act by his hurt pride, shame and anger after having heard Ponticianus' story, Augustine still could not persuade himself to break with his *consuetudo carnalis*.[122] In his attempt to follow the two men in their heroic decision, he fell into a grave inner crisis, a struggle of life and death of himself against himself. Part of him really wanted to embark upon this new way of life, but another part obstinately refused to do so. Racked by hesitations he remained undecided, and found himself hanging in unbearable suspense. It was as if he was trying to pull himself up by his own bootstraps. A sudden chant of a nearby child (♫*tolle, lege!*♪) whilst lying in tears underneath a fig tree, followed by the application of *sortes Paulinae*, proved in the end sufficient to unite his utterly divided will behind the heroic decision to take up an ascetic way of life, and to freely submit to Christ.

P. Courcelle thought it inconceivable that such a trivial incident could bring about a major change in Augustine's will. He subsequently questioned the historicity of the child's voice.[123] L.C. Ferrari, too, in a string of articles, expressed doubts concerning Augustine's conversion account. He followed P. Courcelle's lead to take the voice of the child as

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[122] Notice that for Monnica the taunt of the slavegirl had proven sufficient to break with her alcohol addiction, spurred on as she was by her sense of shame and guilt (*Conf.* ix. viii (18)).

[123] C. Starnes 1990, p. 242: 'The whole point of this [i.e. Courcelle's] argument is intended to disprove that Augustine's conversion hangs on anything so trivial and external as the voice of a real child heard over a wall and the random reading of Scripture'.

Augustine's imagined (or invented) inner voice.[124] There are however persuasive arguments in favour of the factual truth of Augustine's account, and most scholars now accept the veracity of the incident without reservation.[125]

It will be assumed that the chant "♫*tolle, lege!*♪" came from a real child playing(?) at a neighbouring house, invisible from where Augustine was lying at that moment in time.[126] Probably, the child, too, could not see Augustine. Why it was singing these words is difficult to find out, but it is certain that in the child's mind 'nothing could have been more remote than the salvation of Augustine's soul'.[127] In accepting the historicity of the conversion process, the initial difficulty P. Courcelle had with the conversion story needs to be addressed anew: how is it possible that Augustine's radical conversion could have depended on the trivial coincidence of a neighbouring child repeatedly singing "♫ *tolle, lege!*♪", whilst he was in such deep distress?

### 2.3.2. Why the "tolle, lege" scene is vital to this study on *Fortuna*

In *Confessiones*, not his sudden chest pains, but the "*tolle, lege*" incident proved to be the crucial experience that led Augustine firmly to believe in the need of "*Fortuna*" to reach the happy life. This insight in man's dependence on factors outside his control to be able to do right formed the basis of his controversial view on God's grace. K.J. Weintraub recognizes the importance of Augustine's conversion moment for his understanding of the Catholic

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[124] In the oldest manuscript, the voice came from 'de divina domo' (from the divine house), but the others all have 'de vicina domo' (from the neighbouring house). P. Courcelle believes the first is the correct reading, which would underpin his claim that the voice was not real. Surely 'vicina' was the original reading. The copyist, influenced by the semi-miraculous description of the event mistakenly wrote 'divina' instead of 'vicina'. The word 'divinitus' appears a few lines later, which probably made the mistake the copyist made even more understandable. In his article 'Ecce audio vocem de vicina domo (*Conf.* 8, 12, 29)', *Augustiniana* 33 (1983), 232-245), L.C. Ferrari still thinks that the voice was not a real one, but that it came 'de domo Dei. Nevertheless, he accepts Augustine wrote 'de vicina domi', and not 'de divina domi', but he thinks the (imagined) source of the voice to be the house where Augustine and his company was staying. His mother was there during his conversion crisis, and L.C. Ferrari thinks Augustine's struggle with his sexual indulgence was closely connected with his mother in many ways, so that Augustine fittingly thought the voice came from her direction. This solution is not satisfactory, and seems too strained and too far-fetched to be true. I will argue that seeking advice from his mother was the last thing he wanted to do at that moment.

[125] A. Sizoo sums up several convincing arguments why the story must be true, and why the arguments of P. Courcelle are not convincing (A. Sizoo, 'Augustinus' bekeringsverhaal als narratio', *Augustiniana* 4 (1954), 240-257 (p. 253, n. 18). See also F. van Fleteren 1990, pp. 66-67.

[126] A. Solignac (intr. and notes), E. Tréhorel & G. Boissou (trnsl.), *Les Confessions: livres VIII-XIII* (Bibliothèque augustinienne: Œuvres de saint Augustin 14) (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1992 [=1996]), p. 549 puts it this way: 'Nous croirons volontiers qu'il sagit d'un événement naturel qui, dans les conditions du moment, prend pour celui qui le perçoit une signification providentielle'.

[127] The quotation comes from H. Chadwick 1991, p. xxiii. In a delightful article (written in Latin!), A. Sizoo has made an imaginative suggestion wherein the nearby child actually saw Augustine lying underneath the fig tree. Since it was near the end of August, the child began to chant "*tolle, lege*", meaning "pick up, and collect, or "pick up and sort" [i.e. the fallen figs on the ground]!" Such a regional, Milanese harvest song was most likely to be unknown to the African provincial Augustine (See also G. Wills 1999, p. 48). As J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 63) points out, 'it is hard to *refute* such a thesis'. Nevertheless, it makes us more aware of how trivial the incident may well have been.

faith: 'At the time of the writing of the *Confessions*, an entire vision of the human condition rested on the fulcrum of that great personal moment'.[128]

One could object that Augustine may have come to his doctrine of grace simply by studying the Bible and hearing other conversion stories. In *Confessiones* he then "reinvented" his own conversion story in such a way that it would underpin his new understanding. Augustine, however, had always strongly linked knowledge of God with self-knowledge. His conversion experience had a big impact on how he came to see other people's conversions, and on his understanding of the Bible, in particular those texts on grace, original sin and predestination. If a chance hearing of a child's voice could have had the amazing effect on Augustine that, all of a sudden, he was willing to resign from his high-profile post, renounce all sexual pleasures, and submit to Christianity, then it will become more understandable that he was prepared to discern the fingerprints of God in many other seemingly trifling and meaningless coincidences.[129] After such a powerful experience, he would have found it less difficult to acknowledge man's utter dependency on God, even if he thereby risked obliterating man's control over his own destiny. Augustine was in the starkest terms confronted with his utter incapacity to solve his inner crisis during his conversion pangs. Perhaps only someone living through such complete helplessness could have come to the conclusion that man is wholly at the mercy of God's grace, not merely to reach the happy life, but to do any good at all.

The triviality of the chance event that triggered Augustine's conversion only made his awareness of man's inner weakness more palpable. God aided Augustine by having prearranged for him the slightest external impulse, enough to tip the balance. His conversion experience proved to have been a tremendously privileged event, wherein man's flawed condition revealed itself in its most acute form.

### 2.3.3. Chance reading via the use of sortilege

Augustine's conversion process consisted of two consecutive chance events. First, there was the voice of a child suddenly intruding upon Augustine's inner struggle. Next, he applied sortilege with the little book of the Pauline epistles, which presumably was still lying upon his gaming table. Firstly, the use of *sortes Paulinae* will be discussed.

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[128] K.J. Weintraub, 'St. Augustine's *Confessions*: The Search for a Christian self', in *The Hunger of the Heart: Reflections on the Confessions of Augustine*, ed. by D. Capps & J.E. Dittes (Society of the Scientific Study of Religion Monograph Series 8) (West Lafayette: Society of the Scientific Study of Religion, 1990), 5-30 (p. 19).

[129] J.C. Van Fleteren, 'St. Augustine's Theory of Conversion', in *Augustine: Second Founder of the Faith*, (ed. by J.C. Schaubelt & F. van Fleteren) (Collectanea augustiniana 1) (New York: Lang, 1990), pp. 65-80, persuasively argues that Augustine interpreted other lives in terms of his own. His conversion 'served in his mind as a kind of paradigm for all mankind' (p. 67).

### 1. SORTILEGE AND THE *FORTUNA (PRIMIGENIA)* OF PRAENESTE

The technique of sortilege is particularly relevant to this study: utter randomness was of its very essence. The most famous Roman oracle based on sortilege was that of the *Fortuna (Primigenia)* of Praeneste.[130] To ensure the unpredictability of the process, thereby raising the procedure above any suspicion of manipulation, a child (boy or girl) was chosen because of its innocence to pick up (*tollere* or *ducere:* "to draw") a wooden tablet from a pile.[131] The text written on the tablet in ancient script was considered to be the oracle of the goddess.

Perhaps the procedure of this famous ancient oracle may have encouraged Augustine to take the repeated chant of the child "♫ *tolle, lege!* ♪" to mean "*pick up and read*", thereby urging him to apply sortilege to the Pauline epistles.[132] He must have been familiar with the oracle at Praeneste, because it was explained in Cicero's *De divinatione*, which Augustine had read.[133] Augustine seems to have taken the sudden voice of the child itself to be a kind of divine oracle obtained through sortilege, because it had all the required characteristics: it was coincidental (and thus free from any purposeful intention), and uttered by an innocent child (boy or girl). The words *tolle, lege* could have unconsciously strengthened the link with the oracle technique used at Praeneste, commanding Augustine to make use of sortilege (and the power of the lots) in order to generate a second divine oracle, which would solve his inner crisis.[134]

### 2. THE SECRET BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF SORTILEGE

Augustine discusses in *Confessiones* the working of sortilege, in the context of his infatuation with astrology.[135] He was impressed with the high success rate of their

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[130] On the *Fortuna* of Praeneste, see Part I, chpt.1.1.

[131] K. Latte 1960, pp. 177-178, n. 6.

[132] P. Courcelle ('L'enfant et les "sors bibliques"', *Vigiliae Christianae* 7 (1953), 194-220) thinks that Augustine invented the story afterwards, and thus looks mainly for Christian sources behind Augustine's conversion story. If the historicity of the conversion moment is accepted, other sources of inspiration must be looked for which may have led Augustine to take "*tolle, lege*" as a divine command to apply sortilege.

[133] CICERO, *De divinatione* II. 85; Augustine refers to this work in *De ordine* I. vi (15).

[134] In modern terminology three different forms of divination can be seen at work: bibliomancy (a random opening of books such as the Bible, or Virgil's *Aeneid*), kledonomancy (the practice of appealing to a chance word overheard), and the oracle technique at Praeneste is an example of rhapsodomancy (writing out passages from books on separate slips and drawing one of them at random). All these rest on randomness as the vehicle (almost literally taken from Michiko Yusa, s.v. 'Chance', in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* vol. 3 (ed. in chief Mircea Eliade) (New York: Macmillan), pp. 192-196 (p. 195). Later, Augustine would condemn the use of Biblical sortilege as a divine oracle to settle secular affairs. AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* LV. xx (37). I owe the reference of this text to E. Hendrikx, 'Astrologie, waarzeggerij en parapsychologie', *Annalen van het Thijmgenootschap* 44 (1956), 325-352, (p. 334). See also J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, pp. 65-66.

[135] For a discussion of Augustine's view on astrology, see the next chapter (*De civitate Dei*).

predictions. Vindicianus explained this by comparing the astrologer's procedure with applying sortilege to a book.[136] No doubt, he had, above all, the *sortes Vergilianae* in mind.[137]

> A quo ego cum quaesissem quae causa ergo faceret ut multa inde vera pronuntiarentur, respondit ille ut potuit, vim sortis hoc facere in rerum natura usquequaque diffusam. Si enim de paginis poetae cuiuspiam longe aliud canentis atque intendentis, cum forte quis consulit, mirabiliter consonus negotio saepe versus exiret, mirandum non esse dicebat si ex anima humana superiore aliquo instinctu nesciente quid in se fieret, non arte sed sorte, sonaret aliquid interrogantis rebus factisque concineret.[138]
>
> *I asked him why it was that many of their [i.e. of the astrologers] forecasts turned out to be correct. He answered me (as well as he could) that the power apparent in lots, a power everywhere diffused in the nature of things, brought this about. So when someone happens to consult the pages of a poet whose verses and intention are concerned with a quite different subject, in a wonderful way a verse often emerges appropriate to the decision under discussion. He used to say that it was no wonder if from the human soul, by some higher instinct that does not know what goes on within itself, some utterance emerges not by art but by 'chance' which is in sympathy with the affairs or actions of the inquirers.*

Vindicianus does not claim that this power (*vis sortis*) is present between the actual position of the stars and the situation of the consulter. He instead focuses on the way the astrologer interprets his client's horoscope. Here, the astrologer is guided by a higher instinct ('superior instinctus') to say something apposite to the particular situation of the other. His success is therefore not derived from the science (*ars*) of studying the stars, because he probably would have made an equally successful prediction if he had before him a completely inaccurate horoscope. Still, Vindicianus does not claim that success was due to mere chance ("casus", "temeritas"), which would have been the response of an Epicurean or a sceptic who denies the possibility of divination.[139]

He only rejects the view also Quintus held in *De divinatione*, namely that correct predictions made through astrology and sortilege are the result of reason or science (*ars*). Instead, he reduces it to *vis sortis*, which is founded on the Stoic principle of *συμπάθεια*, a power apparent throughout the entire cosmos,[140] and which mysteriously inspires the astrologer to utter a correct prediction.

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[136] Also in refuting astrology in *De diversis quaestionibus, quaestio 45* (adversus mathematicos) Augustine links astrology with sortilege: '*But if men want to pay tribute to their [sc. the mathematicians'] expertise, they should also mention the fact that skilled divination belongs even to the writing on lifeless parchments, regardless of subject matter, from which parchments one's lot often springs forth conformably to one's will*'.

[137] It has been argued from the instances in *Historia Augusta* that from the third *c.* AD on, the verses of Virgil's *Aeneid* even began to replace the simple sentences of the oracle at Praeneste, because he was considered to be an inspired *vates* (Jacqueline Champeaux (1982, I, 76). It was very common to consult in private *sortes Vergilinanae*. The first testimony comes from emperor Hadrian, and already then it seemed to have been a well-established, common practice *Historia Augusta*, *Hadrian* 2.8.

[138] *Conf.* IV. iii (5). H. Chadwick (1994, p. 55) translates here "respondit ille ut potuit" into '*He replied that the best answer he could give...*', but it seems more likely that Augustine wishes to point out that Vindicianus - being not a Christian – gave him the best possible answer that could have been expected from someone ignorant of God's Wisdom. Later, (in *Conf.* VII. vi (8)), he would give the correct response: it all boils down to God's just order.

[139] See the section on divination (in the chapter on Stoicism, part I).

[140] H. Chadwick 1991, pp. 55-56, n. 7.

Jung's idea of synchronicity perfectly fits with the explanation given in *Confessiones* of the power of the lots (*vis sortis*), which is also apparent in the oracle book *I Ching*, the Chinese version of sortilege. From this perspective, the consultant's inner world was connected with the outer world (the outcome of the oracle) in an a-causal, mysterious way.[141] Later, as a Christian, Augustine will realize that not *vis sortis*, but God was acting on consulter and consultant by his hidden discernment.[142]

The coinciding of the child singing "♫ *tolle, lege!* ♪" while Augustine was in deep distress weeping underneath a fig tree, can in itself be regarded as another illustration of the power which Vindicianus claimed was diffused in nature. The child sang these words for completely different reasons. It was certainly not aware that its neighbour, who overheard the chant, chose to apply the words to his current situation, taking them to mean he had to consult the Pauline epistles through sortilege.[143]

### 3. Sheer Randomness ... Resulting in a Predictable Outcome

When Augustine decided to use sortilege, he seems to leave it over to the power of the lots to solve his agonizing state of indecisiveness. After the command of the child's voice, he ran back to the place where Paul's epistles were lying.[144] He picked up the little book, opened it, and chanced upon Romans 13: 13-14:

> non in comessationibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et impudicitiis, non in contentione et aemulatione, sed induite dominum Iesum Christum et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis.
>
> *Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts.*

The moment he had read these lines, his conversion was accomplished.

However, this understanding of the facts is somewhat misleading. Augustine must have expected such an outcome of the oracle.[145] After having read the crucial passage, he writes: 'nec ultra volui legere nec opus erat' ('*I neither wished nor needed to read any further*').[146] This suggests that he intended to continue reading until he would hit upon something that would particularly strike him as apt. The oracle technique of sortilege was under these conditions a safe principle to which he could hand over his own power of decision, because its outcome

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[141] See the section on Synchronicity in part I, chapter 3 (philosophy), section 3.2.4.
[142] *Conf.* VII. vi (10). See also the section 'refuting astrology' in the chapter on *De civitate Dei*, for Augustine's Christian view.
[143] This would be an instance of kledonomancy.
[144] *Conf.* VIII. xii (29).
[145] C. Starnes (1990, p. 243, n. 176) states: 'It did not matter where he happened to open Paul's text. Wherever it was he would only have had to read until he found something which he could have taken in this sense [i.e. an admonition to embrace a chaste life and to convert to Christianity] and, since Paul's teaching is the same throughout, he would soon have found a passage which stated what Christ demands of his followers'.
[146] *Conf.* VIII. xii (29).

was pretty predictable. Further, consultant and consulter were on this occasion one and the same person. Augustine not only left some flexibility in selecting the passage, he also was the one who had to interpret the text.[147] This again gave him considerable control over the process, especially in the light of his extraordinary resourcefulness in interpreting texts.

The sheer randomness, so essential to the technique of sortilege, remained on this occasion remarkably under his control. Presumably he never would have dared to interpret "*tolle, lege*" as a command to flip a coin, pick it up, and then accept the outcome unreservedly, "head" meaning "convert to a monastic way of life", and tail "become a married *fidelis* like Ponticianus, and thus continue in your worldly career" (Monnica would already have been satisfied with this kind of conversion). In this case there would only be a fifty percent chance that Augustine was going to be exhorted to take up a monastically inspired life [read: the ideal philosophical life he so much desired, within the confines of the Catholic Church].

#### 4. "Only a Divine Command Will Make me Whole-Heartedly Obey"

When applying sortilege, Augustine wanted to be confronted with a passage "by sheer happenstance" which exhorted him to give up his worldly career and sexual pleasures, while making it clear he had to embrace Christ. He already knew that Paul urged his readers to a better way than married life, i.e. celibacy.[148] He did not need a divine oracle to find out *what* he had to do, he needed a divine command to unite his divided will behind the decision to do it. The child's chant "*tolle, lege*" made Augustine suddenly realize that he could obtain such a divine oracle through sortilege with Paul's epistles.

### 2.3.4. The Considerable Leap from a Fortuitous Child's Chant "♫ *tolle, lege!* ♪" to a Divine Command Urging Augustine to Apply *Sortes Paulinae*

The moment Augustine willingly took the child's repeated chant to be God's way of telling him to apply sortilege with the Pauline epistles, his conversion became as good as inevitable. He remembered Ponticianus telling him how Antony had abandoned his worldly life on a chance hearing of the Biblical passage: *'Go, sell all you have, ... and come, follow me'* (Matthew 19:21).[149] The focal point of his conversion lies in Augustine's interpretation of

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[147] This would not be the case if he were to consult an astrologer, or the *Fortuna* at Praeneste.

[148] *Conf.* VIII. i (2).

[149] *Conf.* VIII. xii (29). W.P. Elledge rightly states: 'In his acceptance of Antony as exemplar, Augustine's own conversion is in effect accomplished. He knows, as we know, the outcome of that story' (W.P. Elledge 'Embracing Augustine: Reach, Restraint, and Romantic Resolution in the *Confessions*', *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 27.1 (1988), 72-88 (p. 85)).

the fortuitous chant of a neighbouring child. He seems to be at pains in *Confessiones* to emphasise its providential meaning. The words "cum ecce" announces that something sudden, unusual is about to happen.[150] F. van Fleteren sees in the imprecise description of the garden scene a stylistic element which enhances 'the importance of the workings of divine providence and grace'.[151] In saying that the voice '*was that of a boy or a girl, I do not know which*' ('quasi pueri an puellae, nescio'), Augustine provides the chant with an angelic aura. The other conversion stories recounted in *Confessiones* make Augustine's decision to take the child's voice to be a providentially arranged divine command seem less conspicuous. The two courtiers at Trier discovered "by chance" the book of the *Life of Antony*, and Antony himself "happened" to be in Church, when the words were read. F. van Fleteren argues that the chance nature of the event is an important element in Augustine's *Formgeschichte* of a conversion.[152] The chance incident "*tolle, lege*" in Augustine's own conversion belongs to a rather different category.[153] The slavegirl calling Monnica a boozer, and Augustine ridiculing those infatuated with the circus games, are chance incidents much more explicit and related to the situation of the candidate convert, compared to the vague words "*tolle, lege*" coming from an anonymous neighbouring child.[154] The part Augustine himself played in reading into it a divine command telling him to apply *sortes Paulinae* is therefore far greater than those of the protagonists in the other conversion stories. Augustine himself turned the slightest suggestion from outside into a full-blown divine intervention. To a certain extent, he brought about his own semi-miraculous conversion,[155] since it ultimately hinged upon his own, rather far-fetched, interpretation of a child's chant, combined with a flexible application of sortilege, which resulted in a predictable outcome. Precisely the triviality of the chance occurrence seems to have forced Augustine in presenting the event more mysterious than it actually must have been, in order to demonstrate its providential character.

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[150] Also in *De ordine* (I. iii (6): '**cum ecce** aquae sonus pone balneas quae praeterfluebat, eduxit me in aures', *cum ecce* announces something unexpected which will illuminate God's wonderful way of ordering the events. H.H. Gunermann links this *cum ecce* with Virgil's use of *ecce* in *Aeneid* VI.46 and VI. 255, where it announces the arrival of a divinity (H.H. Gunermann, 'Literarische und philosophische Tradition im ersten Tagesprach von Augustinus' De ordine', *Recherches augustiniennes* 9 (1973), 182-226 (p. 194 n. 46).

[151] F. van Fleteren 1990, p. 67. He notices that the scene in the garden begins with a certain vagueness: 'nescio quid enim, puto, dixeram [...] ego sub quidam fici arbore stravi me nescio quomodo'.

[152] F. van Fleteren 1990, p. 67.

[153] Also P. Courcelle comments that the supposed divine admonition behind the child's chant is of quite a different category than the other instances in the conversion stories of *Confessiones*.

[154] P. Courcelle 1953, pp. 196-198: 'Nulle part, à ma connaissance, nous n'avons un équivalent de *Tolle, lege*, s'il est le cri, détourné de son sens propre, que profère un petit voisin en train de jouer'.

[155] I have taken over this term from Anne Hawkins, *Archetypes of Conversion: The Autobiographies of Augustine, Bunyan, and Merton* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1985), p. 51.

The immediate cause for taking the chant to be a divine admonition was that he could not think of a children's song containing the words "*tolle, lege*".[156] It makes the voice realistic and unaccountable at the same time, but it remains a meagre excuse for perceiving a divine element in the incident. It was unlikely that he, an African provincial, was familiar with children's songs from the Milanese region.[157] Besides, it would not be unusual for a child to simply make up its own song. If Alypius, too, heard the song, it was highly unlikely he would have found it as unusual as Augustine did.[158]

Augustine was free to supply his own interpretation, also in another aspect of the incident, namely in the understanding of the vague commands "*tolle, lege*". The meanings of these two verbs are far from univocal. The attempts made to explain why the child was singing "♫ *tolle, lege!*♪" illustrate the variety of interpretations of these two commands.[159] The most natural interpretation was, "*pick up and sort*",[160] but something like "*lift the anchor, furl the sails*" was also possible, for those who think the child was playing with a boat at the neighbouring house.

To take the trifling child's chant "♫ *tolle, lege!*♪" to be nothing else (nihil aliud) than a (semi-)miraculous divine command (divinitus mihi iuberi), telling Augustine to pick up Paul's epistles and read it (i.e. apply sortilege) is, to say the least, not self-evident, even far-fetched.[161] P. Courcelle keenly remarks that at that particular moment the epistles of Paul were not even within his sight, since the book was presumably still lying on the gaming table.[162] Augustine's readiness to interpret the incident in this way is the more extraordinary, because he must have known that it was likely to bring about his conversion,[163] which a part of his will still stubbornly resisted. Augustine perhaps thought he could deceive his dissociated will, by commanding it in a circuitous way. It is as if he said to himself: 'Perhaps if not I, but a divine oracle commands you to make the necessary sacrifices and to embark upon a monastic way of life, you will be prepared to obey whole-heartedly'.

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[156] J.J. O'Meara (2000, p. 186) rightly points out that this detail 'endorses the reality of this episode'.
[157] A. Sizoo, 'Ad August. Conf. VIII. xii (29)', *Vigiliae Christianae* 12 (1958), 104-106.
[158] Alypius was nearby, but there is no mention of him hearing the voice also.
[159] P. Courcelle (1968, p. 191) lists possible interpretations, for instance, that the child was merely practicing the imperative as a school lesson.
[160] This was how A. Sizoo (1958) interpreted the command: it was a harvest song urging Augustine to pick up and collect the figs that had fallen on the ground.
[161] My previous suggestion that the oracle technique used at the *Fortuna* of Praeneste may have helped Augustine to take the child's voice as an oracle itself to apply sortilege, does not undermine the fact that it was a far-fetched interpretation of the words.
[162] P. Courcelle 1953, pp. 195-196.
[163] It is inconceivable that the whole "divinely inspired" process would end in an anticlimax, whereby Augustine would hit upon a text, which would not lead to his conversion.

P. Brown states that Augustine came to understand that the force of habit could only be broken through processes entirely outside his control.[164] This seems indeed the conclusion Augustine wishes his audience to draw after having read his story (taking "processes entirely outside his control" to mean "God's grace"). But a close analysis of the procedure involved shows that Augustine retained remarkable control over the whole course of action. The conversion - on the surface of the same league as that of Paul and Antony - has an orchestrated, self-devised feel about it, which is lacking in the other stories. Augustine himself seems to have decided a (semi-)miracle had to happen to him in order to solve his impasse. He thereby used to his advantage the utter randomness of events around him (read: the working of *Fortuna*) in order to generate his own (semi-)miraculous conversion. This suspicion of artificiality is not based on the way Augustine presented this event in *Confessiones*, but stems from the bare facts derived from it.

# 3. A Psychological Enquiry into Augustine's (Semi-)Miraculous Conversion

## 3.1. Augustine's Christian Analysis of his Fallen Condition

### 3.1.1. Stealing Fruit in a Garden of Thagaste

Sixteen years before his conversion, the youthful Augustine committed a terrible crime in a garden of his hometown Thagaste. He thought himself more depraved than Catiline[165] for having stolen some pears with his group of friends. In a lengthy analysis he focused on the question what had moved him (or delighted him) to commit such a crime.[166] In the end, he was convinced that, alone, he would not have done it.[167] The peer pressure of the "gang" to which he belonged made him join in their crime. Augustine concludes:

> O nimis inimica amicitia, seductio mentis investigabilis [...] Cum dicitur, 'eamus, faciamus,' et pudet non esse impudentem.[168]

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[164] P. Brown 2000, p. 168.

[165] *Conf.* II. v (11); P. Courcelle, 'Le jeune Augustin, second Catilina', in Pierre Courcelle, *Opuscula selecta: Bibliographie et Recueil d'articles publiés entre 1938 et 1980* (Paris, 1984), pp. 319-328.

[166] For instance, G. Wills, *Saint Augustine* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), p. 14: 'Why did Adam commit the original sin [...]? The problem is exactly Augustine's in his own little orchard'.

[167] *Conf.* II viii (16).

[168] *Conf.* II. ix (17). The easiness with which Augustine is persuaded stands in contrast with the morally stronger Alypius, who put up a more robust resistance when his friends wanted to take him to the circus games: '*Some of his friends and pupils, ... despite his energetic refusal and resistance, used friendly violence* ('familiari violentia') *to take him into the amphitheatre*' (*Conf.* VI. viii (13)).

*O friendship all too harmful, unfathomable seducer of the mind. [...] As soon as the words are spoken "Let us go and do it", one is ashamed not to be shameless.*

### 3.1.2. Primal Sin in the Garden of Eden

Augustine inserted this pear theft episode in *Confessiones* in order to meditate on the wickedness involved in the act. He believed his youthful crime to be echoing the sin of Adam in that other garden, the garden of Eden.[169] The similarity did not end with the fact that both crimes involved taking fruit from a tree,[170] thereby trespassing the law.

In *De Genesi ad litteram* (AD 401-415), shortly written after *Confessiones*, Augustine presented an unusual analysis of Adam's motivation to sin:

Figure 8: Adam doubting what to do

Ita et Adam, posteaquam de ligno prohibito seducta mulier manducavit ei que dedit, ut simul ederent, noluit eam contristare quam credebat posse sine suo solacio contabescere, si ab eius alienaretur animo, et omnino illa interire discordia, non quidem carnis victus concupiscentia, quam nondum senserat in resistente lege membrorum legi menti suae, sed amicali quadam benevolentia, qua plerumque fit, ut offendatur deus, ne homo ex animo fiat inimicus.[171]

*After Eve had eaten from the forbidden tree and offered Adam its fruit to eat along with her, Adam did not want to sadden her. He thought she might pine away without his comforting support, when she was banished from his heart, and die sundered from him. He was not overcome by disordered desire of the flesh, which he had not yet experienced as a thing in his body at odds with his mind, but by a kind of friendly goodwill. This often happens that God is being offended as not to turn a friend against us.*

Adam forfeited his bond with God and complied with Eve's request, because he knew that she would have it difficult without his companionship. He thus sacrificed his own blessed state in order to support his (only) consort. G. Wills eloquently calls Adam's sin 'misguided gallantry'.[172]

In Augustine's slightly different explanation of Adam's sin in *De civitate Dei*, Adam has become less magnanimous.[173] He committed his sin deliberately in order to maintain his "bond of company" (*socialis necessitudo*) with Eve. Nevertheless, in both interpretations,

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[169] See L.C. Ferrari, 'The Pear-Theft in Augustine's Confessions', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 16 (1970), 233-242 (pp. 237-238); H. Derycke, 'Le vol des poires, parabole du péché originel', *Bulletin de littérature ecclesiastique* 88.3-4 (1987), 337-348; see also Anne Hawkins (1985, p. 39), who calls the pear theft episode 'an autobiographical analogue to original sin in the garden of Eden'.

[170] To make the incident even more comparable with the story in *Genesis*, Augustine refers to the pears as *poma*, 'the Vulgate's generic word for fruit in the Garden of Eden' (J. Freccero 1986, p. 27).

[171] *De Genesi ad litteram* XI. 59. I am indebted to G. Wills (1999, pp. 14-15) for the translation and the link between the two passages.

[172] G. Wills 1999, p. 14.

[173] AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* XIV. 13.

Adam made the mistake 'that there is no one – not even one's sole companion – to whom consent ought to be yielded ahead of God'.[174]

The primal sin therefore did not so much originate from the sexual, but rather from the social nature of the bond between Adam and Eve. This kind of transgression could thus potentially occur in every social relationship. The pear tree incident seems to illustrate this point. G. W. Schlabach writes in his challenging article: 'If Adam knowingly sinned out of social solidarity with Eve, whom Satan had deceived, then companionate friendship is hardly more pristine and unproblematic than is sexual reproduction'. He further considers sexuality 'the most vivid and mercurial of all social relationships',[175] and compellingly suggests that 'companionate friendship and sexual desire were two parts of a single problem for Augustine'.[176] Friendship was indeed to Augustine "*seductio* mentis investigabilis" ('the unfathomable *seducer* of the mind').[177]

## 3.2. Augustine's Problematic Attachments to others

### 3.2.1. Misguided Gallantry and *socialis necessitudo*

The relationship between Augustine and his mother has been in the past the subject of many studies focusing on the Oedipal complex.[178] Later, the attention shifted to his pre-Oedipal phase, whereby his narcissistic traits were looked into. *Confessiones*, more than any other book of Antiquity, lends itself to such a psycho-historical approach. Instead of turning immediately to the formative mother-son relationship, it is equally important to examine how Augustine related to other people.

Many episodes from Augustine's life illustrate the impact his surrounding had on his behaviour, which often led him to pretend to be someone he was not, for fear of being rejected or ridiculed. These incidents reveal how disjointed his inner life had become from his actual behaviour. In his youth, peer pressure compelled him to be as daring in sexual escapades as his notorious companions, whereby he even invented certain events in order

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[174] E. Teselle, 'Serpent, Eve, and Adam: Augustine and the Exegetical Tradition', in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. by J.T. Lienhard, E.C. Muller and R.J. Teske (Collectanea augustiniana 2) (New York: Lang, 1993), pp. 341-361 (p. 351).

[175] G.W. Schlabach, 'Friendship as Adultery: Social Reality and Sexual Metaphor in Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin', *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), 125-147, (p. 145 n. 32 & p. 133); E. Teselle 1993, p. 351: 'Marriage was for Augustine the first and foremost natural sign of the social character of human life'.

[176] G.W. Schlabach 1992, p. 144 n. 32. This can, according to him, explain the fact that 'Augustine consistently juxtaposed, and often merged, references to friendship and eroticism'.

[177] *Conf.* II. ix (17).

[178] Several studies are bundled in D. Capps & J.E. Dittes (eds.), *The Hunger of the Heart: Reflections on the Confessions of Augustine* (Societies for Scientific Study of Religion, Monograph Series 8) (West Lafayette: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1990).

that they would not despise him.[179] He had resource to convenient excuses - even towards his friends - to explain his departure from Thagaste, Carthage and Rome. He continued to associate with his Manichean friends, although he had come to seriously doubt their religion. He did not dare to openly break with them, because of the many friendships he had in the group.[180] Even after his (private) conversion to a monastically inspired Christian life, the first few weeks he publicly pretended that nothing had changed. Meanwhile, he was already planning to resign from office and to use his ill-health as excuse.

Augustine was a highly sensitive person with an intense emotional life who had a great awareness of subtleties.[181] This made him more vulnerable to even unspoken pressure from outside, because he could easily sense what someone expected of him. Following passage illustrates just how intrusive the mere presence of others could be on his conduct. After his conversion he wished his Manichean friends could see how deep he was touched by what he read in the psalms:

> Audirent ignorante me utrum audirent, ne me propter se illa dicere putarent quae inter haec verba dixerim, quia et re vera nec ea dicerem nec sic ea dicerem, si me ab eis audiri viderique sentirem.[182]
>
> *Without me knowing that they were listening, lest they should think I was saying things just for their sake, I wish they could have heard what comments I made on these words [sc. of the Psalms]. But in truth I would not have said those things, nor said them in that kind of way, if I had felt myself to be heard or observed by them.*

During Augustine's conversion crisis, when tears were welling up in him, he had to run away even from his closest friend, Alypius, to be alone:[183] only in solitude he felt safe enough to allow his deepest inner feelings to surface.[184] This was also the main reason why Augustine had run into the garden in the first place the moment he became so distraught by what Ponticianus had told him.[185]

Augustine does not leave unmentioned another instance of the demands of friendship, this time with his friend Nebridius as victim. Just like Augustine, he wished to devote his time to the study of wisdom, but then 'Nebridius autem amicitiae nostrae cesserat'

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[179] *Conf.* II. iii (7).
[180] *Conf.* V. x (18): '*My close association with them* [*sc.* his Manichean friends] (*familiaritas eorum*) *made me reluctant to look elsewhere*'.
[181] For instance, H. Marrou, *Saint Augustine and his Influence through the Ages*, trans. by P. Hepburne-Scott (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 62: 'He is intensely and permanently affected by his emotions'.
[182] *Conf.* IX. iv (8)).
[183] Just before he explicitly mentions that he did not feel inhibited by Alypius' presence when his inner crisis was unfolding (Alypius followed him into the garden) (*Conf.* VIII. viii (19): '*Although he was present, I felt no intrusion on my solitude*').
[184] One could argue that the need for solitude when one wishes to show one's true emotions, is common. This may be true, but, it is perhaps less normal that someone is so much aware of the impact of others.
[185] *Conf.* VIII. viii (19).

(*Nebridius yielded to the pressure of his friendship with us*'). He took on the job as assistant teacher, because their friend Verecundus claimed him iure familiaritatis (*by right of friendship*).[186]

*Ius familiaritatis* obliged Nebridius to do something he rather wished not to. Augustine suffered from similar pressure to remain in his teaching job.[187] He was expected to make the fortune of the family, and he felt himself obliged to pursue further his worldly career, even though he had come to despise it. When Augustine told his intimate circle he was going to resign from his position to lead a monastic way of life, they tried to change his mind. Augustine comments on this:

> adversus linguam subdolam, velut consulendo contradicentem et, sicut cibum adsolet, amando consumentem.[188]
>
> *Tongues that appear to be offering helpful advice can actually be hostile opponents and in offering love, may devour us in the way people consume food.*

H. Chadwick rightly sees a link with the earlier mentioned passage of friendship being '*a dangerous enemy, a seduction of the mind*'.[189]

## 3.2.2. Augustine Losing Himself in Those he Loves Deeply

### 1. The Death of a Friend

That there was something unhealthy about his relationships can also be witnessed in his excessive reaction when close attachments came to an abrupt end. When teaching in Thagaste, his (unnamed) dearest friend passed away.[190] Augustine felt that half his soul had died with him, and he went through a grave and long depression. In the end, he even had to leave his hometown, because everything there reminded him of his friend.[191] Many years later, Augustine learned the cause of his excessive sorrow:

> miser eram, et miser est omnis animus vinctus amicitia rerum mortalium, et dilaniatur cum eas amittit. [...] nam unde me facillime et in intima dolor ille penetraverat, nisi quia fuderam in harenam animam meam diligendo moriturum acsi non moriturum?[192]
>
> *I was in misery, and misery is the state of every soul overcome by friendship with mortal things and lacerated when they are lost. [...]The reason why that grief had penetrated me so easily and deeply was that I poured out my soul upon the sand by loving a person sure to die as if he would never die.*

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[186] *Conf.* VIII. vi (13).
[187] *De Academicis* II. ii (4).
[188] *Conf.* IX. ii (2); see H. Chadwick 1991, p. 34 n. 16, and p. 156 n. 2.
[189] *Conf.* II. ix (17): 'o nimis inimica amicitia, seductio mentis investigabilis'.
[190] *Conf.* IV. iv (70 – IV . viii (13).
[191] This is yet another instance of Augustine presenting the "public" reason for leaving Thagaste in *De Academicis* (II. ii (3): '*When I disclosed to you alone among all my friends my hope and intention of returning to Carthage to seek a more brilliant career...*'), while we learn in *Confessiones* the personal motive behind this decision (*Conf.* IV. vii (12)).
[192] *Conf.* IV. vi (11) and IV. viii (13).

This analysis of his excessive grief shows that Augustine has become his own therapist. He had difficulties in remaining true to his inner self, and easily lost himself in others, lacking a self-confident sense of independence, which would have enabled him to function adequately, even when a dear friend departed.

### 2. Separation from his Consort

Many years later, another end to a close relationship made him experience the same kind of excessive grief. Although he considered his relationship with his concubine to be purely based on sexual gratification,[193] when he describes his feelings after her forced departure, the same symptoms surface as with the death of his closest friend:

> Avulsa a latere meo tamquam impedimento coniugii cum qua cubare solitus eram, cor, ubi adhaerebat, concisum et vulneratum mihi erat et trahebat sanguinem.[194]
>
> *The woman with whom I habitually slept with was torn away from my side because she was a hindrance to my marriage. My heart which was deeply attached was cut and wounded, and left a trail of blood.*

The fact that taking another concubine could not heal his wound[195] confirms that his relationship had grown into something more than merely a convenient pact to gratify his sexual lust.[196] This bears out G.W. Schlabach's earlier mentioned point that 'companionate friendship and sexual desire were two parts of a single problem for Augustine'.[197]

In reading the (Neo-)Platonist books, he perceived what wickedness actually was: not a substance, like the Manchees believed, but a perversity of the will, twisted away from the God, and rejecting its own inner life. [198]

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[193] *Conf.* IV. ii (2).

[194] *Conf.* VI. xv (25). Cf. *Conf.* IV. vii (12) on losing his friend: 'portebam enim concisam et cruentam animam meam impatientem portari a me' (*'I carried my lacerated and bloody soul when it was unwilling to be carried by me'*). The expression "she was torn from my side, leaving me bleeding" would be an apt description of a forced separation between Adam and Eve, since Eve was made from one of Adam's ribs. (*De civitate Dei* xii. 28: 'Quod vero femina illi ex ejus latere facta est, etiam hinc satis significatum est quam chara mariti et uxoris debeat esse conjunctio' *'The fact that a woman was made for the first man from his side shows us clearly how affectionate should be the union of man and wife'*). Perhaps Augustine unconsciously looked back to this primal relationship to describe the pain inflicted upon him, when he was forced to separate from his consort, to whom he throughout the years had always remained faithful. In the end, Adam actually wished to prevent loosing his (only) companion, and for this reason alone, he was prepared to commit the sin, which would be so terribly punished by God. For this allusion to Adam end Eve, see J. Freccero, 'Autobiography and Narrative', in *Reconstructing Individualism, Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. by Th. C. Heller, M. Sosna, and D.E. Wellbery (Stanford (Cal.): Stanford University, 1986), pp. 16-29 (p. 27); on Augustine's faithfulness, see *Conf.* IV. ii (2).

[195] *Conf.* VI. xv (25): *'But my wound, inflicted by the earlier parting, was not healed. After inflammation and sharp pain, it festered. The pain made me as it were frigid but desperate'*.

[196] See also A. Solignac *BA* 13, pp. 677-679: Augustin reconnaît d'ailleurs que cette "liaison" était basée à l'origine sur une passion charnelle (IV. ii (2)); mais elle s'accompagnait aussi d'un réel amour; si les lignes qu'il consacre au départ de cette femme paraissent brèves aux hommes d'aujourd'hui, elles disent néanmois avec toute la netteté désirable la douleur qu'il ressentit à la séparation' (p. 679).

[197] G.W. Schlabach 1992, p. 144 n. 32.

[198] *Conf.* VII. xvi (22): 'et quasivi quid esset iniquitas et non inveni substantiam, sed a summa substantia, te deo, detortae in infima voluntatis perversitatem, proicientis intima sua et tumescentis foras'.

Augustine placing *iniquitas* in the will rejecting its intimate being and swelling up with things external, bear many resemblances with his problem of losing himself in others, and betraying his true inner self under *socialis necessitudo* and *ius familiaritatis*.[199]

### 3.2.3. The Suffocating Primal Mother-Son Relationship

#### 1. A Problematic Separation / Individuation Process[200]

One does not need to look too far to discover from where Augustine may have developed a need for close attachments with others. It is a commonplace to state that the parent-child relationship often determines the way the child relates to other people.[201] Augustine's mother, Monnica, was very much emotionally involved with him, showing a possessive kind of love. Her deep attachment to her son is well attested, and the feeling seemed to have been mutual.[202] The line between his own identity and that of his mother was not clearly drawn in this primal relationship. In some areas, she treated her son more 'like an extension of herself'.[203] It

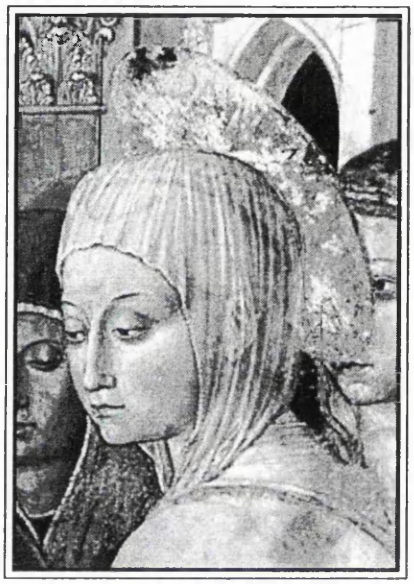

Figure 9: *Monnica, the clinging mother of Augustine (fresco 15th c.)*

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[199] Also the idea that '*we have been justly handed over to the ancient sinner, the president of death, who has persuaded us to conform our will to his will which 'did not remain in your truth*' (*Conf.* VII. xxi (27)), reflects the idea that Augustine felt he had betrayed his true self due to letting himself being too much influenced by what others desired of him.

[200] This term is taken over from Paula Fredriksen 1978, p. 219. The separation/individuation phase occurs in the first two-and-one-half-years of the mother-child relationship, wherein 'the personality's ability to form object-relations occurs'.

[201] Paula Fredriksen, 'Augustine and his Analysts: The Possibility of a Psychohistory', *Soundings* 61 (1978), 206-227 (p. 219): 'The psychological birth of the infant proceeds in the symbiotic matrix of the mother-child relationship'; J.G. Kristo 1991, p. 22: 'The basic attitude about the world's acceptance of the individual is acquired through the trustful relationship between infant and mother'.

[202] For instance, *Conf.* V. viii (15): '*As mothers do, she loved to have me with her, but much more than most mothers'.* Augustine already expressed his mother's great love for him *De ordine* I. xi (32).

Monnica could not live without her son Augustine, she always wanted to be with him:

Si rebus viventium interessent animae mortuorum ... in somnis ... me ipsum pia mater nulla nocte desereret, quae terra marique secuta est, ut mecum viveret (*Could the souls of the dead come back to visit us in our sleep, my pious mother would not fail to visit me every night, that mother who followed me over land and sea that she might live with me*) (AUGUSTINE, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, XIII.16).

See also R. Brändle & W. Neidhardt, 'Lebensgeschichte und Theologie: Ein Beitrag zur psychohistorischen Interpretaion Augustins', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 40 (1984), 157-180 (p. 162); P.W. Pruyser, Psychological Examination: Augustine', in D. Capps & J.E. Dittes (eds.), *The Hunger of the Heart: Reflections on the Confessions of Augustine* (Societies for Scientific Study of Religion, Monograph Series 8) (West Lafayette: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1990), pp. 31-38 (p. 36-37). Interestingly, Augustine later would recognizes this possessive kind of love, by which she lamented the absence of her son, to be proof that there survived in her the remnants of Eve. For Augustine's attachment to his mother, see, for instance, P.W. Pruyser, 1990, p. 36.

[203] E. Teselle, 'Augustine as Client and as Theorist', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 (1986), 92-102 (p. 97); so also Paula Fredriksen 1978, p. 220: 'She treats Augustine like an extension of herself, pushing him in the direction she wants him to go'.

left him with no strong sense of being an autonomous individual, lacking a healthy degree of self-possession. Augustine almost inevitably experienced serious problems of self-cohesion,[204] and he formed similar unhealthy close attachments with his friends. Consequently, he too easily "poured out his soul unto the sand".[205]

Because the mother-son relationship was so intense, this must have been for Augustine emotionally strenuous. Monnica was manipulative,[206] controlling,[207] dominating,[208] and not averse to use emotional blackmail to make her son submit to her will.[209] In the past, she had shown herself the moral superior of her husband, wherby her dominance culminated in her final victory of converting him to her religion.[210]

From early on in life, Augustine was involved in a struggle to maintain his own independence as part of "the separation/individuation process".[211] The death of her husband Patricius made Monnica even more intensely preoccupied with her favourite son. Perhaps it was not mere coincidence that around the same time, Augustine procured himself a concubine.[212] He also fell in with the Manichees, who were very hostile to his mother's religion. His circle of Manichean friends formed, as it were, a secure bastion against her dominance, and it gave him a reassuring sense of self-determination. These were all signs that he attempted to break away from his mother's overbearing control.

### 2. The Catholic Faith, Battle Ground of Wills

The area in which Monnica was most meddling, was Augustine's religious allegiance: '*For the sake of my salvation she was wholly devoted to me*'.[213] The deluge of heart-renting tears she shed in her son's presence over his apostasy from *her* faith, show all the traits of emotional blackmail. She tried to force him back into obedience by confronting him how much he

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[204] J.G. Kristo 1991, p. 30.
[205] *Conf.* IV. viii (13).
[206] J.E. Dittes 1986, p. 61; W.P. Elledge 1988, p. 74; J.G. Kristo 1991, p. 24.
[207] J.E. Dittes 1986, p. 61.
[208] P. Brown 2000, p. 17: 'What Augustine remembered in the *Confessions* was his inner life; and this inner life is dominated by one figure – his mother, Monnica'; P.W. Pruyser (1990, p. 36): 'His major attachment in life seems indeed to have been the one with the mother'.
[209] See section 2.3.2.
[210] It seems that, like Augustine, Patricius was dominated by his mother, who lived with him when he was already married to Monnica (*Conf.* IX. ix (19). Augustine tells us how Patricius 'bowed to his mother's request' to have the slavegirls punished for gossiping about his wife, and he 'met his mother's wish' to give them a whipping. In the only story where Patricius has a role to play, he can be seen submissively obeying his mother.
[211] J.G. Kristo 1991, p. 28; Paula Fredriksen 1978, p. 220.
[212] There is no justification in claiming that Monnica hated his unnamed consort. However, this does not mean that for Augustine it helped him to maintain a distance between him and his mother. As a widow, she now could focus entirely on her favourite son.
[213] *Conf.* VI. ii (2). J.J. O'Meara (2000, p. 212) states: 'It would not be an exaggeration to say that so far as lay in her power she tried almost to compel him by every force at her disposal to become a Christian'.

hurt her with his (religious) rebellion, and with his cold-hearted refusal not to comply with her dearest wish.[214]

### 3. Monnica's Dream: Augustine Standing Next to Her on a Wooden Rule

Monnica's close attachment with her son also finds expression in her dreams,[215] notably in the famous vision of her standing on a wooden rule, whereby she is promised that her son will stand next to her: '*where she was, there was I also*'.[216] This wording has sexual connotations. They echo the ancient formula used by the bride during a Roman marriage rite ('*Where you are, there will I be*'), but in a perverted way: Augustine (the man) will follow the lead of Monnica (the "bride").[217] Converting to the Catholic faith must have come over to Augustine as a massive capitulation, a sort of annihilating embrace, since yielding to Monnica's greatest desire meant the ultimate sacrifice of his autonomy and (self-constructed) individual identity.[218] It is therefore not surprising that Augustine resented so deeply converting to "her" Catholic faith, because it felt like the end of his selfhood.

### 4. Escape to Italy

When he travelled to Italy, he deceived his mother Monnica, promising her he would not take the ship that was going to sail away that night.[219] He did not dare telling her face to face (even though he was twenty-nine!) he was going to Italy without her. He knew only too well how much he would pain his mother by leaving her behind.[220] His illness on arrival may well have been partly the result of excessive guilt and emotional distress.[221]

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[214] These unceasing tears are, according to W.P. Elledge (1988, p. 77) 'terrible emblems of his failed obligation to meet her expectations and play out her script, they advertise both his refusal to relieve her suffering and indirectly her own conditional, unforgiving love'.

[215] R. Brändle & W. Neidhart 1984, p. 163.

[216] *Conf.* III. xi (19).

[217] H. Chadwick 1991, p. 50, n. 42. Actually: 'Ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia' (Where you are "Gaius", I am "Gaia") (QUINTILIAN I. vii (28); PLUTARCH, *Roman Questions* 30), but it reveals the submission, the taking over of the name of the husband by the bride.

[218] W. P. Elledge, 'Embracing Augustine: Reach, Restraint, and the Romantic Resolution in the *Confessiones*', *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 27.1 (1988), 72-89 (p. 77). His thesis is in line with Augustine's problem of attaching himself too deeply to others. It combines literary criticism, the oedipal approach and some of the more recent (pre-oedipal) narcissistic diagnosis of Augustine's personality.

[219] *Conf.* V. viii (15).

[220] Ch. Kligerman (1957, p. 477) thinks that his actual motivation to go to Rome was to escape his mother. I would not go that far, but the fact that Augustine did not want Monnica to come along (while his consort and Adeodatus did) despite her desperate pleading, at least reveals the mental strain that existed between the two. He did not seem to wish his mother's intrusion in the new life he was going to build up in Italy.

[221] P. Brown 2000, p. 58; D. Burrell, 'Reading the *Confessions* of Augustine: The Case of Oedipal Analyses', in *The Hunger of the Heart: Reflections on the Confessions of Augustine* (ed. by D. Capps & J.E. Dittes) (Society for the Scientific Study of Religion: Monograph Series vol. 8) (West Lafayette: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1990), pp. 133-142 (p. 139). In the past, he also had not told Monnica of his plans to leave Thagaste, and to return to Carthage (*De Academicis* II. ii (3)). He only informed his patron Romanianus about his

Escape from his mother could never have been a real solution to his problem. He did not yet realize that his troubled individuation process also affected the relationships with his friends: he desperately was in need of their acceptance,[222] and prepared to deny his true self in order to win their approval. He carried with him his tendency to establish unhealthy attachments with other people. Each new environment brought new peer pressure, and Augustine inadvertently ended up being markedly directed by others, because he lacked the inner stability and confidence to oppose the opaque forces arising from these unhealthy attachments.

### 3.2.4. On the verge of surrender in Milan

#### 1. MONNICA'S GROWING PRESSURE ON AUGUSTINE TO SUBMIT TO BAPTISM

Merely a year later (spring AD 385), the fifty-four year old Monnica, following Augustine by land and sea, made the dangerous crossing to Italy, to reunite with her son in Milan.[223] Psychologically this may well have been a considerable blow to Augustine.[224] He hoped that she would lessen her pressure on him, once he informed her that by now, he had rejected Manicheism. To his surprise (and probably dismay), Monnica did not leap for joy, but even redoubled her petitions and tears, setting Augustine a new challenge: she wanted him to become a baptized member of the Church before *she* died.[225]

One of Monnica's manipulative strategies to accomplish her son's baptism, was to pressure him to marry a, no doubt, Catholic girl.[226] She could hold forth as reason that he needed a rich, aristocratic wife for further worldly success. Possibly, this worldly aspect, too,

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intention to go to Carthage to seek there a more brilliant career ('tu [sc. Romanianus] Carthaginem *inlustrioris professionis gratia* remeantem, cum tibi et *meorum nulli* consilium meum spemque aperuissem'). The truth was, of course, that he wished to escape Thagaste because he was thoroughly unhappy in his hometown after the death of his friend.

[222] Paula Fredriksen 1978, p. 221.

[223] *Conf.* VI. i (1). There seems to have been a hidden criticism of Monnica when Augustine tells us a few pages later that Nebridius, too, had joined him at Milan, but '*he left his home and his mother, who was not to follow him*' (*Conf.* VI. x (17)). J.J. O'Donnell is probably too polite here, when he recognizes the contrast between the two mothers, but simply points out that Nebridius 'has no Monnica to pray him home'. If there was one thing Nebridius' mother could still do, despite her being far away from her son in Carthage, was to pray. What she could not do was to make her prayer more efficient by putting pressure on her son in dramatically displaying her tormented longing in endless tears, to see her son converted. Unlike Monnica, Nebridius' mother could not make use of emotional blackmail to get her way with her son.

[224] D. Burrell 1990, p. 139: 'Augustine's bid for autonomy [...] was met by Monica's journeying herself to Milan'.

[225] *Conf.* VI. i (1); see also R. Brändle & W. Neihardt 1984, p. 167.

[226] *Conf.* VI. xiii (23). Monnica thought that Augustine would be more easily persuaded to baptism if he were to marry. It is highly likely that Monnica was looking for a Catholic girl.

was part of her motivation to arrange a profitable marriage at this stage of his career.[227] As mentioned before, the idea of marriage made Augustine uncertain, because he knew that, once married, he would be seriously restricted. He repeatedly asked Monnica what was to happen after his marriage, but she could not answer this.[228] It shows how little control he had over his own future life, and how completely at a loss he was about which course to follow. He nevertheless must have increasingly felt that his reluctant capitulation to the pressure exercised on him to opt for marriage, might have been a horrible mistake.

### 2. Growing Passivity

In Milan, Monnica seemed to be succeeding in forcing her will upon Augustine. He had become more and more passive, letting control over his life gradually slip away. The main reason for this failure still was that he too easily let his surrounding affect his decisions. His growing passivity in Milan indicated that Augustine felt that he more than ever was complying with the expectations of others, instead of following his own will: 'quod autem invitus facerem, pati me potius quam facere videbam' ('*I saw that when I acted against my wishes, I was passive rather than active*').[229] It seems that he was increasingly sacrificing himself by giving in to what other people wanted him to become. This growing feeling of being lived would eventually lead to his conversion crisis.[230] J.J. O'Donnell notices in this context the growing use of passive forms in *Confessiones*: '*instabatur... promittebatur... instabatur... petebatur... expectabatur*: control is slipping out of Augustine's hands'.[231] About Augustine's attempt in Milan to establish together with his friends an Epicurean styled community, he remarks:

> This is the last episode before the garden scene in which Augustine consciously plans and controls his destiny. Already here, he is oddly passive, and the banishment of his concubine is described the same way.[232]

Several elements, which helped him to be more stable and self-confident, were swept away from under his feet. He had lost his faith in astrology,[233] which must have given him

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[227] *Conf.* VI. xi (19). Like Patricius, she, too, had wished to defer Augustine's marriage in the past because it could be detrimental to his worldly career (*Conf.* II. iii (8)). Paula Fredriksen (1978, p. 220) writes: 'She wants her son to be a success'.

[228] *Conf.* VI. vii (12).

[229] *Conf.* VII. iii (5) He continues: '*And this condition I judged to be not guilt but a punishment*'. This is Augustine's new insight after encountering (Neo-)Platonism, which makes it possible for him to reject the Manichean dualistic theory of the two wills.

[230] J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 381): 'The period narrated by *Bks.* 7 and 8 is one marked by helplessness in the face of divine providence, with volition and control restored by the act of divine grace in the Milan garden'. Augustine, however, was not aware that divine providence was controlling him at the time: he felt completely overwhelmed by external forces, mostly the pressure coming from other people's expectations and demands. He was increasingly being lived, so that he found himself in a situation where he did not want to be in.

[231] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 377.

[232] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 381.

[233] *Conf.* VII. vi (8) - (9).

some sense of direction and certainty in life. The painful dismissal of his consort,[234] after having lived together for fourteen years, must have had a further destabilising effect on Augustine's psychological health.

Not only his mother, his new Christian surrounding at the court of Milan (for instance, Simplicianus, Ambrose, who had welcomed him there, and Ponticianus), but also his very own quest for Wisdom directed him back into the arms of the Catholic Church.

## 3.3. The Imaginative Solution: Augustine's Conversion under a Fig Tree and the Breaking away from *consuetudo carnalis*

When Augustine wished to make the heroic decision to lead a monastic way of life, to his own horror he could not bring himself to do so. His will was utterly divided, and no matter how hard he tried, he could not unite himself behind this praiseworthy intention.

### 3.3.1. The Origin of Augustine's Dissociated Will

#### 1. The Manichean Notion of a Divided Will

In his search to explain this monstrous condition of a dissociated will in *Confessiones*, Augustine elaborately rejected the Manichean idea of two wills, one evil and one good.[235] None of this argumentation formed part of his conversion crisis proper: it rather was a reflection upon it afterwards. It makes us more fully aware that for a long time, Augustine actually believed the Manichean concept of two wills, considering it for many years an adequate explanation of the battle going on inside him, which now, more than ever, manifested itself as a hopelessly divided will. Deep down Augustine must have sensed that the good of his true self (which he identified with the divine element within him)[236] was constantly oppressed by external forces (i.e. it was vulnerable to other people's expectations or demands, whose love and approval he needed, the pressure of *socialis necessitudo*). This made it appear as if an evil force (the race of Darkness) was constantly threatening his innocent true self (the race of Light).[237] The passivity of the good within Manichean

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[234] *Conf.* VI. xv (25).
[235] *Conf.* VIII. x (22) – x (24).
[236] P. Brown (2000, p. 40) writes: 'For Augustine, the need to save an untarnished oasis of perfection within himself formed, perhaps, the deepest strain of his adherence to the Manichees'.
[237] This link is particularly clear in *Conf.* VI. ii (3).

doctrine fitted well with the passivity of his inner self, when it felt overpowered by the pressure and expectations of other people.[238]

The Manichean concept of two wills, a good and an evil one, seemed particularly adequate to describe Augustine's inner conflict. His "true" self could identify with the good will, while Augustine giving in (like Adam) because of *socialis necessitudo*, alienated a part of himself with which he could not identify himself. This was a theory in which he could recognize himself, but it could not offer real progress.[239]

#### 2. A New Interpretation: God's Punishment

As a Christian, Augustine tried to find the real cause of his divided will during his conversion crisis, now that he had come to reject the Manichean solution. What intially was a suspicion that it all could be brought back to a hidden punishment of original sin,[240] he later confirms:

> Ideo mecum contendebam et dissipabar a me ipso, et ipsa dissipatio me invito quidem fiebat, nec tamen ostendebat naturam mentis alienae sed poenam meae. et ideo non iam ego operabar illam, sed quod habitabat in me peccatum de supplicio liberioris peccati, quia eram filius Adam.[241]
>
> *I was in conflict with myself and was dissociated from myself. Yet this was not a manifestation of the nature of an alien mind [which is the view of Manicheism] but the punishment suffered in my own mind. The dissociation came about against my will. And so it was "not I" that brought this about "but sin which dwelt in me", sin resulting from the punishment of a more freely chosen sin, because I was a son of Adam.*

He considered his divided condition to be the punishment of sin that dwelt in him, and this sin was in turn a consequence of Adam's sin. It is in this way that we are reminded of what happened in the garden of Eden, and of Augustine's re-enactment of this sin with the pear theft in the garden of Thagaste.

### 3.3.2. 'Arboreal Polarisation'[242]

L.C. Ferrari argues that the pear theft and Augustine's conversion underneath a fig tree, are two garden episodes forming two principal poles of the work.[243] Marjorie Suchocki is of the same opinion: 'The structure of The *Confessions* is centred on the two trees of the Garden of

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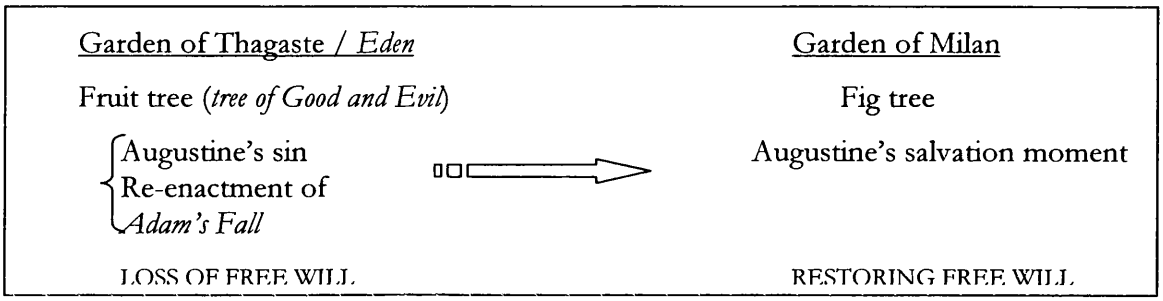
[238] Nebridius criticised the passivity of the Good in Manichean doctrine (*Conf.* VI. ii (3)).
[239] See also P. Rigby, Paul Ricoeur, Freudianism, and Augustine's Confessions', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 (1985), 93-114, (p. 103 n. 7): Manichees considered themselves as 'partially bound to evil, and they thought themselves divine'.
[240] *Conf.* VIII. ix (21). He already was thinking in the direction of punishment before he met the (Neo-)Platonist books, so it seems, to explain his passivity when he acted against his wish (*Conf.* VII. iii (5)): '*And this condition I judged to be not guilt but a punishment*'.
[241] *Conf.* VIII. x (22).
[242] The term is taken from L.Ch. Ferrari's article (see the next footnote).
[243] L.C. Ferrari, 'The Arboreal Polarisation in *Confessiones*', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 10 (1979), 35-46.

Eden: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, represented through the pear tree in Book II, and the tree of life, depicted in Book VIII as the fig tree'.[244] Whereas the pear theft stands for Adam's fall, the fig tree, announces the moment of salvation, i.e. Augustine's conversion.[245] This happens just after having experienced Adam's punishment in the fullness of its horror: a diseased will leading to a total impasse.[246]




It would be futile to question whether there was really a fig tree under which Augustine threw himself in tears on the ground.[247] No doubt, he had chosen to mention this detail, precisely because of its great symbolic potential (the figtree of Adam (Genesis 3:7, see also John 1: 48) the figtree under which Nathaneal was called by Jesus). Augustine probably remembered that he was crying under a tree and that he knew there were many figtrees in the garden, and so he conveniently presumed that he was lying under one, and it may well have been so.

### 3.3.3. A Therapeutic Breakthrough

What made Augustine run to the fig tree in the first place deserves our fullest attention:

> Ubi vero a fundo arcano alta consideratio traxit et congessit totam miseriam meam in conspectus cordis mei, oborta est procella ingens ferens ingentem imbrem lacrimarum. et ut totum effunderem cum vocibus suis, surrexi ab Alypio (solitudo mihi ad negotium flendi aptior suggerebatur) et secessi remotius quam ut posset mihi onerosa esse etiam eius praesentia.[248]

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[244] Marjorie Suchocki, 'The Symbolic Structure of Augustine's Confessions', *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50 (1982), 365-371 (p. 366). J. Freccero (1986, p. 26), too, sees the importance of the two tree episodes in *Confessiones*: 'Two spectacular moments are juxtaposed, and an arbitrary period of time is said to separate them: the first is the theft of pears in a nearby orchard; the second is the conversion proper, which takes places under a fig tree in a garden of Milan'.

[245] The fig tree can be brought into connection with the fig leaves with which Adam shamefully covered his genitals, or alternatively, with the fig tree under which Jesus spied Nathanael (John 1:48:50) (Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, 'A Likely Story: The Autobiographical as Epideictic', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 57. 1 (1989), 23-51 (p.28).

[246] Marjorie Suchocki 1986, p. 371.

[247] *Conf.* VIII. xii (28).

[248] *Conf.* VIII. xii (28).

Figure 10: Scene in the garden
Paiting of School of Fra Angelico

*From a hidden depth a profound self-examination had dredged up a heap of all my misery and set it 'in the sight of my heart'. That precipitated a vast storm bearing a massive downpour of tears. To pour it all out with the accompanying groans, I got up from beside Alypius (solitude seemed to me more appropriate for the business of weeping), and I moved further away to ensure that even his presence put no inhibition upon me.*

There seems to have been no demonstrable immediate cause of this sudden emotional collapse, so that it must have arisen from Augustine's inner turmoil. The passage reads like a breakthrough in a therapeutic sense. It is as if Augustine inadvertently opened a gate deep inside him, which up till then had been carefully sealed off in order to prevent a deep hurt to emerge with a vast flood of tears. Once the gates open, at last all his suppressed pain and suffering of the past could surface. Most likely it was the grief and despair of his narcissistically injured child within.[249] It had suffered from being rejected, from being withheld caring love whenever it did not fulfil the expectations of his surrounding, above all, of his mother.[250] For so long Augustine had to endure the constant pressure of having to conform to the will of others, being denied genuine, unconditional support and love. The grief finally erupted, because precisely at this moment, Augustine's selfhood was facing a total submission to his mother's will when he was unremittingly pushed from all sides, even by his own reasoning, to embrace her Catholic faith totally. In the past his embrace of Manicheism and of his like-minded close friends who shared an aversion for what his mother stood for, had buttressed him against her overpowering longings.[251] But now, his personal quest for wisdom and his desire to live a life in philosophy, urged him to become a full member of the Catholic faith. Deep down, however, his basic resentment against his mother's dominance had made him hostile to take such a step, because it also would mean (total) surrender to her. Augustine found himself in a terribly confused and tense state.

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[249] On Augustine's narcissistic injury, see, for instance, D. Capps, 'Augustine as Narcissist: Comments on Paul Rigby's "Paul, Ricoeur, Freudianism, and Augustine's *Confessions*"', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53.1 (1985), 115-127 (p. 120); E. Teselle, 'Augustine as Client and as Theorist', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25.1 (1986), 92-102 (p. 97); J.G. Kristo 1991, p. 30.

[250] D. Capps 1985, p. 123: 'It mattered a great deal to him that he would eventually gain her unmitigated approval'.

[251] When he had converted his dearest unnamed friend of Thagaste to Manicheism, he does not name this religion, but describes it as follows: 'superstitiosas fabellas et perniciosas, proper quas me plangebat mater' (*'those superstitions and pernicious mythologies which were the reason for my mother's tears over me'* (*Conf.* IV. iv (7)). Nevertheless, his mother does not play any part in the story of the death of his friend. Perhaps this is further indication that his conversion to Manicheism and his (often successful) attempts to make his friends apostatise from the Catholic faith was somehow part of his struggle with his mother.

## 3.3.4. The Failure of Lady Continence's Chaste Seduction

Despite the heated debate about the historicity of the conversion scene, there seems to be little doubt that the vision Augustine was supposed to have experienced about Lady Continence just before this mental breakdown, was literary fiction.[252] Nevertheless, it could still be regarded as a valuable attempt on his part to render, so many years later, a clearer picture of what was happening inside him during those chaotic, emotionally draining moments.

### 1. THE CALL FOR CONTINENCE IN THE BROADEST SENSE AND SUBMISSION TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH

On the surface, Augustine (afterwards) thought that his struggle was mainly about deciding upon sexual abstinence. Lady Continence chastely seduced (*honeste blandiens*) him to come over to her, and in order to receive and embrace him she stretched out her pious hands, filled with many examples of all ages.[253] In the other camp, there were his old friends (*antiquae amicae meae*), still tugging softly at his fleshly garment, whispering disgraceful things in his ear.[254]

Continence and its counterpart fornication should not be considered purely within a sexual context, but they apply to all social relationships.[255] Choosing continence would affect Augustine's relation to the whole world, and not just his affairs with women. His old friends are therefore an appropriate imagery to depict his worldly attachments in general: he has to let go of all these (deep) attachments in order to embark upon a life of continence. His problem of *consuetudo carnalis* should likewise be taken in its broadest sense, so that they do not only refer to his sexual lust.

The allegorical figure of Lady Continence is demanding something else too in his vision. She smilingly encourages Augustine to cast himself upon God, and no longer to solely rely on his own *virtus* to decide upon continence: 'proice te in eum! Noli metuere, non

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[252] The vision is recounted in VIII. xi (27). J.J. O'Meara 2000, p. 181; A. Sizoo, 'Augustinus' bekeringsverhaal als narratio', *Augustiniana* 4 (1954), 240-257 (p. 256): 'Niemand zal er aan twijfelen, dat deze allegorie opgekomen is niet in de tuin te Milaan, maar in de bishopswoning te Hippo Regius' ('No one will doubt that this allegory has emerged not in the garden of Milan, but in the bishop's residence at Hippo Regius').

[253] Almost literally translated from *Conf.* VIII. xi (27).

[254] *Conf.* VIII. xi (27).

[255] For instance, in *Conf.* v. xii (22) Augustine tells us that his students committed fornication against God, merely for loving worldly goods. C. Starnes (1992, p. 231) - independently of G. W. Schlabach - thinks continence means "'holding oneself in a particular way", while the other choice, incontinence or dissipation of whatever sort to which each of us is prone, is the unrestrained and irrational pursuit of an endless multiplicity of finite goods'. Also Carol Harrison (2000, p. 189) points out that 'concupiscence had a much wider range of reference in Augustine's thought than the purely sexual'.

se subtrahet ut cadas: proice te securus!'[256] (Neo-)Platonists relied on their own *virtus* to reach perfection, but Christians cast themselves upon their God so that they may be healed.

### 2. Why Lady Continence fails

No matter what Lady Continence said or did, she could not bring Augustine to run over to her and embrace her. One of the main reasons why she failed, was that she, too, was trying to persuade (seduce) Augustine to comply with her wish, while this was precisely what stood at the root of his dissociated will. There was something else about her, which made it impossible for Augustine to obey her.

Augustine unconsciously reveals in *Confessiones* what kept him from complying with Lady Continence's command. After his conversion, he refers to Monnica's dream: 'stans in ea regula fidei in qua me ante tot annos ei revelaveras' ('*I stood firm upon that rule of faith on which many years before you had revealed me to her*').[257] Interestingly, he does not mention here that he was standing beside his mother on the same rule, although this had been the essence of Monnica's dream: where Monnica was, there would also Augustine be. Significantly also, he specifies now the "regula linea" as a "regula fides". This in a sense reduces the danger of complete surrender to Monnica, limiting it to accepting her religious faith, while retaining his (and her) individuality.

That he refers to the dream straight after his conversion experience, indicates that his surrender to Christianity was in his mind closely linked with "standing beside his mother" and "being where his mother was", even though he does not explicitly mentions this part of the dream.[258] Logically, in order to stand where his mother stands, Augustine has to come over to her. This seems to have been unconsciously expressed in the vision of Lady Continence, who partly represents Monnica, inviting him to fulfil the prophecy of her dream.[259] It is Monnica's wish that Augustine will cast himself upon God, i.e. becomes a *fidelis*. The vision turns into a complex, but also more accurate, and complete representation of what Augustine's inner struggle was about. The strange mingling of erotic language and chastity coming from Lady Continence (her "chaste seduction") may well be the result of conflating the, above all, philosophical call for continence, with the dream of Monnica, since this also contained an erotic dimension (the marriage context).

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[256] *Conf.* VIII. xi (27).
[257] *Conf.* VIII. xii (30), the dream of Monnica is recounted in *Conf.* III. xi (19)-(20).
[258] Omitting this crucial element of the dream is in itself, of course, significant.
[259] Almost literal quotation from W.P. Elledge 1988, p. 79.

It becomes now more understandable why Augustine is not an inch closer to conversion after his vision of Lady Continence. He would end up surrendering completely to Monnica, thereby loosing his independence. W. P. Elledge concludes:

> Recreation through her [sc. Monnica] means emotional arrest in her, renunciation of unique selfhood for hers [...] It is no wonder, then, that Augustine hesitates to leap into Continence's outstretched arms.[260]

Augustine had already gone into the garden: 'ubi nemo impediret ardentem litem quam mecum aggressus eram, donec exiret' ('*there no one could interfere with the burning struggle with myself in which I was engaged, until the matter could be settled*').[261] Monnica was in the house. He clearly wished to avoid also her when facing such a momentous decision in his life.[262]

Probably his instinctive awareness that there seemed no escape possible from total surrender to his mother, made him subsequently psychologically fall apart.

### 3.3.5. Reaching for God through the arms of Monnica via Chance Events

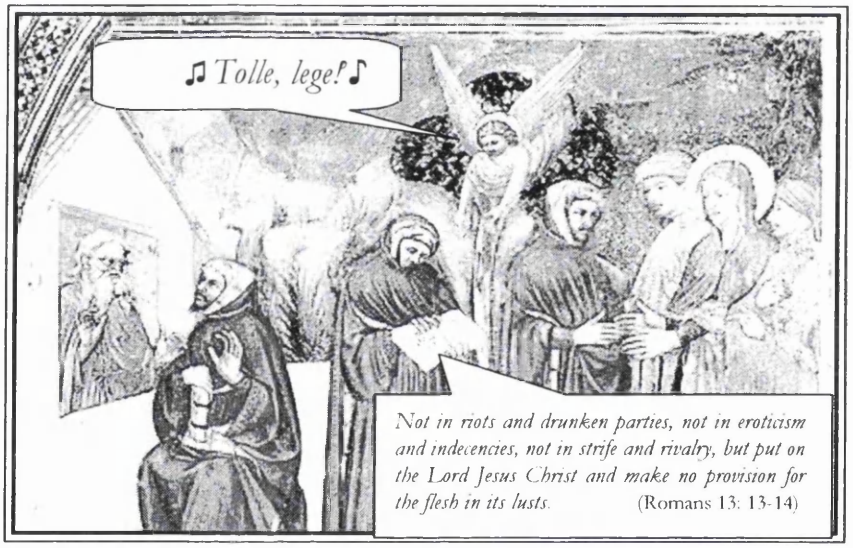


Figure 11: In the visual arts, the child is usually an angel (adapted from a fresco 15th c.)

Immediately after this ineffective attempt of lady Continence, Augustine describes how he ran away to be alone and collapsed under the figtree. Then, suddenly, he hears a child's voice singing repeatedly: "♫ *tolle, lege!* ♫".[263] For a moment his rational, adult mind takes over: is there a child's song with these words he knows of? Because this is not the case, he eagerly considers it to be a divine command, which he does not hesitate to follow. His utterly divided will has no problem uniting behind this particular command, and this for

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[260] W. P. Elledge 1988, p. 79.
[261] *Conf.* VIII. viii (19).
[262] Augustine specifically mentions that Nebridius was not there (*Conf.* VIII. vi (13)). We know nothing of his brother Navigius, but he seemed never important to Augustine.
[263] *Conf.* VIII. xii (29).

two reasons. The child's chant is perfectly in tune with his inner state, giving voice to the damaged child of his true self. In this sense, it just as well could have been Augustine's inner voice.[264] What is further so extraordinary about the child's voice - apart from it being in complete accord with his inner self - is that its command is without any trace of *socialis necessitudo.*

The child is completely detached from Augustine, and the command is therefore without the detrimental social pressure accompanying his relationships. He cannot see the child, and, more importantly, he does not know the child. That the child presumably is not chanting to him, probably cannot see him, and has something totally different on its mind, make these words the most pure and detached external command possible. Augustine is entirely free to respond to it or not, whilst the child itself will in no way be affected (and thus not disappointed) by how he will react to it. It is an exceptionally detached mode of communication, while being perfectly in tune with his most intimate self. This can explain the extraordinary effect the child's voice had on Augustine, while to others it must have seemed an irrelevant, distracting incident.

In her book *Rhetorics of Reason and Desire*, Sarah Spence notices that the child's advice to go and read (*tolle, lege*) does not have 'the direct seductive effect' that Augustine's friends has on him (*eamus, faciamus*) when they wanted to steal pears in an orchard at Thagaste.[265] The close connection between the peartree and the figtree episode, strengthens the perceived link between these two commands.[266] Sarah Spence argues that the commands illustrate a shift in rhetoric: instead of being seduced by the language, as was the case with classical rhetoric in the pear tree episode, Augustine feels free to reflect upon the words the child chants, and then to respond to them. This she considers to be a demonstration of Christian rhetoric, wherein there is place of dialogue and whereby the will is involved.[267]

Such a view does not take sufficiently into consideration the completely different affiliation Augustine had with those giving the command. Augustine had a close bond with his gang of friends in the pear orchard, and, as he points out, it was this bond which made

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[264] Ch. Kligerman 1957, p. 482: 'Probably it was his own voice projected and perceived in hallucinatory fashion'; W. Paul Elledge 1988, p. 85: 'At one level, of course, the child *in* Augustine beckons him backward to its relatively body-careless existence'; Marjorie Suchocki 1982, pp. 371-372: 'It is significant that the voice directing Augustine to life should be the voice of a child. The child, not yet awakened to sexuality, is like an echo of the primeval innocence, and signifies the hope of a new beginning'.

[265] Sarah Spence, *Rhetorics of Reason and Desire: Vergil, Augustine, and the Troubadours* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 79. J. Freccero (1986, p. 26), too, links the call of his mischievous friends with that of the child in the garden.

[266] J. Freccero (1986, p. 26) also recognizes the importance of the two tree episodes in *Confessiones*: 'two spectacular moments are juxtaposed, and an arbitrary period of time is said to separate them: the first is the theft of pears in a nearby orchard; the second is the conversion proper, which takes places under a fig tree in a garden of Milan'.

[267] Sarah Spence 1988, pp. 79-80.

him blindly obey their command: alone he would not have chosen to do it. Such a connection did not exist at all between Augustine and the invisible child singing "♫ *tolle, lege!*♫". Precisely this crucial difference made it possible for Augustine to respond in a different, because free way.

| **Garden of Thagaste** | **Garden of Milan** |
|---|---|
| - fruit tree (pears) | - fig tree |
| - command: "*eamus, faciamus*" | - command: "*tolle, lege*" |
| - gang of friends | - detached, anonymous, innocent child |
| - *socialis necessitudo* (peer pressure) | - no compulsion at all to comply |
| - '*alone I would not have done it*' | - I ran into the garden '*where no one could interfere*' |
| - estrangement from inner self | - embrace of inner self |
| - loss of free will | - recovery of free will |

The smallest suggestion of the innocent child led Augustine to come up with a familiar technique to produce another command, this time more relevant to his current problem. The moment he takes the voice to be a divine command telling him to apply *sortes Paulinae*, he is on the brink of doing what lady Continence failed to achieve: he will cast himself upon God, tuning his will to His will. Also this self-engendered command is completely stripped of all the manipulative aspects of *socialis necessitudo*: the oracle emerging from *sortes Paulinae* comes in the form of an unresponsive, detached written text.

Augustine has thrown himself in the end not in the arms of Monnica, but those of God. When he reads the oracle text, immediately a flood of relief went through him: the miracle had happened.[268] God (not Monnica) had converted him to the life he himself wanted to live: '*The effect of Your converting me to Yourself was that I did not now seek a wife and had no ambition for success in the world*'.[269] From that moment on, his own soul was intimately connected with Him, instead of with his mother. God becomes the rock of his new identity, whereby self-knowledge and knowledge of God were intimately intertwined.[270]

In Augustine's conversion moment, coincidence (or chance) was thus of paramount importance, because it helped to overcome the deadlock in his divided, inner self. Chance events proved to be crucial, not because they were outside his control, as P. Brown suggests, but because they were outside the control of others closely associated with him

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[268] *Conf.* VIII. xii (30).
[269] *Conf.* VIII. xii (30): 'convertisti enim me ad te, ut nec uxorem quaererem nec aliquam spem saeculi huius'.
[270] T.R. Wright, *Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 99: 'The only way to understand God, according to Augustine, is by probing the depths of the self [...] Augustine insists that it is only in the "inmost heart" that God can be known'.

(above all, his mother), and that was what he really needed. The whole process remained firmly under his control. He thought the course of action out, and he felt like following his most inner self during the process, at the prodding of the detached child's chant. By perceiving God's hand behind the chance event, Augustine submitted to His command, and not to other people's desires. His newly adopted life really felt like his own under the protection of God. "*Fortuna*" was thus crucial in his conversion because she provided him with an incident which kept his decision outside other people's control.

## 3.4. The New, Strong-Willed Christian Augustine

### 3.4.1. A Solid Rock Against Other People's Impact

Once he has cast himself upon God, and submitted to His, not Monnica's, will, he felt he had divine support to fend off pressures arising from *socialis necessitudo*: he no longer could be persuaded to do what others liked him to do, whenever this went against God's wish: he would only do what God wanted him to do. Once converted, he lent an ear to his true inner self under the protection of God. His true self was given life-saving oxygen, propped up by God's grace. Augustine identified the key issue as follows:

> et hoc erat totum, nolle quod volebam et velle quod volebas. sed ubi erat tam annoso tempore et de quo imo altoque secreto evocatum est in momento liberum arbitrium meum?[271]
>
> *The nub of the problem was to reject my own will and to desire Yours. But where through so many years was my freedom of will? From what deep and hidden recess was it called out in a moment?*

The rejected "child" in Augustine has been liberated, and the healing process can begin. It is therefore not surprising that he so often uses the imagery of a child in describing his new life, which discovers its identity in its relationship with God: 'infirmitas mea tibi nota est. parvulus sum, sed vivit semper pater meus et idoneus est mihi tutor meus' (*'My weakness is known to You. I am a child, but my Father ever lives and my protector is sufficient to guard me'*).[272] And further:

> quid enim sum ego mihi sine te nisi dux in praeceps? aut quid sum, cum mihi bene est, nisi sugens lac tuum aut fruens te, cibo qui non corrumpitur?[273]

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[271] *Conf.* IX. i (1)). This could therefore be interpreted as follows: the nub of the problem was to reject my former will (which was hopelessly conflated with other people's expectations) and to desire the authentic will of my true inner self, which for such a long time had been repressed and suppressed through other people's influence.

[272] *Conf.* X. iv (6).

[273] *Conf.* IV. i (1); so also AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* IV.2 (AD 387, to Nebridius) 'Quod nolo in eam partem accipias, ut nos in his rebus quasi ad quandam iuventutem firmioris intelligentiae robore pervenisse existimes. Pueri enim sumus, ut dici adsolet, forsitan belli; et non male (*'I would not have you, however, so to apply this illustration as to*

> *Without you, what am I to myself but a guide to my own self-destruction? When all is well with me, what am I but an infant sucking your milk and feeding on you, 'the food that is incorruptible' (John 6:27)?*

P. Brown states: 'He had no hesitation in likening his relation to God to that of a baby to its mother's breast, utterly dependent, intimately involved in all the good and evil that might come from this, the only source of life'.[274] Not everybody would agree with this human condition of total dependency, and this child-father relationship of man with God. It prepared the ground for the Pelagian controversy, since Pelagius thought we should be called sons of God, someone who has come of age, "emancipatio a Deo".[275]

### 1. SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Embracing a life of continence meant he could escape the traps of sexual relationships, the most incontrollable manifestation of the "glue of lust" ('concupiscentiae viscum') wherein he could lose himself. He identified it as the culprit for turning his soul in rebellion against itself.[276] In this particular area, Augustine's healing was a radical surgical treatment, cutting away his physical relationship with women.[277] As argued before, *concupiscentia* was not only a factor in sexual relationships.

### 2. RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIS FRIENDS AND SURROUNDING

After his conversion, Augustine would still be confronted with the pressure of *familiaritas.* When he finally announced his plans to resign, to opt for baptism, and to start living a chaste life, his friends tried to change his mind. But this time, Augustine stuck to his guns, aided by God to ward off their attempts:

> *You had given sharp arrows and destroying coals to answer any deceitful tongues of criticism. Tongs that appear to be offering helpful advice can actually be hostile opponents and, in offering love, may devour us in the way people consume food.*[278]

H. Chadwick rightly connects this passage with the already mentioned passage: '*Friendship can be a dangerous enemy, a seduction of the mind lying beyond the reach of investigation*'.[279]

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*suppose that, in the vigour of a more powerful understanding, I have arrived as it were at the beginning of the soul's manhood. For I am yet but a boy, though perhaps, as we say, a promising boy, rather than a good-for-nothing*); AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. v (13): 'et ego in philosophia puer sum'.

[274] P. Brown 2000, p. 352, referring to (*Conf.* IV. i (1)).

[275] P. Brown 2000, p. 352; so also G. B. Thompson (1990, p. 277): 'While Augustine delighted to comment upon how the helplessness of babies reflects their need of God, Pelagius scorned that kind of dependence, urging followers to develop their own ability to do good (= taken over from P. Brown). See also D. Capps 1985, 115-127 (p. 126): 'Augustine's major theological emphasis in the *Confessions* is the individual's utter dependence, as an impotent and ineffective creature, on God'.

[276] *Conf.* X. xxx (42): '*You will more and more increase your gifts in me, Lord, so that my soul, rid of the glue of lust, may follow me to You, so that it is not in rebellion against itself*'.

[277] Augustine was very careful not to have a woman staying or living at his house, not even his sister, who had joined a convent, or the daughter of his brother (POSSIDIUS, *vita* 26).

[278] *Conf.* IX. ii (2).

Augustine now can withstand the attempts of others to influence him, because he is no longer so heavily dependent on them: through God he has gained the freedom to disappoint them. Nevertheless, the difficulty with his friends would remain a threat throughout his life: he could not cut himself off from his friends, the way he did this with sexual relationships.[280] His drastic solution of sexual continence worked, but of continence in relationships with friends, he continued experiencing difficulties.[281] Throughout his life Augustine expressed his yearning for the physical presence of absent friends in almost erotic language.[282] He also was incapable of assessing the joys of conversation and praise of friends: '*In temptations of a different sort I have some capacity for self-exploration, but in this matter almost none*'.[283] According to P. Brown, 'the most characteristic anxiety of Augustine, was the manner in which he still felt deeply involved with other people'.[284]

Despite his newly found strength, he did not wish to seek the confrontation with his surrounding, fragile as he still must have been in his new life. That is why he chose to use the excuse of his ill-health, in order to avoid pressure coming from his environment to change his mind.

A few years later, he would encountered such a forceful social pressure, that he could not oppose it. It was as if society took revenge for his (selfish) decision to live a withdrawn life, and not to fulfil the expectations of others. In AD 391, the congregation of the Catholic Church at Hippo (under the lead of bishop Valerius) forced him into ordination, not unlike Alypius was being forcibly pressured by his friends to go to the gladiator games.[285] We have seen that this must have been a great shock to Augustine, because he had been so confident that the contemplative life was his true calling. Even this blow did not threaten further loss of self, and he felt strong enough to face with God's help a Catholic crowd as a presbyter and bishop, while remaining true to himself.

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[279] *Conf.* II. ix (17).

[280] Perhaps he first attempted to live the life of a hermit, i.e. cut off from all social relationships, not only sexual, so that he would not face the danger they pose of "being consumed by them". See X. xliii (69): 'Terrified by my sins and the pile of my misery, I had racked my heart and had meditated taking flight to live in solitude'. H. Chadwick thinks this may be because of the influence of Athanasius' *Life of Antony*.

[281] *Conf.* x. xxxvii (60). G.W. Schlabach: 'To remain sexually continent – this at least could he resolve once and for all. Augustine's passion for friendship offered no such line in the sand'. J. J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 219) remarks that Augustine never wrote a Christian treatise on friendship, which he regards as 'a measure of a loss that Augustine never knew how to redress, perhaps because it affected him too intimately for him to articulate and thus to control'. The fact that he had difficulties reflecting upon it in a detached way can be seen as a further sign that friendship remained problematic to him.

[282] G.W. Schlabach 1992, p. 132.

[283] *Conf.* X. xxxvii (60).

[284] P. Brown 2000, p. 174; see also pp. 195-197.

[285] See chapter II. 4.2 on Augustine's ordination; for social pressure on Alypius to visit the gladiator games, see *Conf.* VI. viii (13): 'familiari violentia'.

## 4.4.2. Genuine (but limited) Reconciliation with Monnica

### 1. AUGUSTINE LIBERATING HIMSELF FROM MONNICA'S CLOSE ATTACHMENT

The most threatening and demanding relationship was, of course, the one with his mother Monnica. This, too, seems to have been solved. Monnica lost her overwhelming impact on Augustine, who can now face her with much more self-confidence, standing his own ground. Monnica seems to be the one who from then on slowly withers away: she has lost her son to God. Augustine has received a new self-possession rooted in God and philosophy: his true good was now to cling to God,[286] and everything else had to be subordinated to that, even his close relationship with his mother. This translates itself in his independent behaviour towards her, whereby he criticises her worldly attachment to him. Augustine now condemns Monnica's lamentations when he fled to Italy without her, discerning a vestige of Eve in her behaviour.[287] Later, he would write to a friend, whose mother did not want him to abandon his worldly cares:

> Quid interest, utrum in uxor an in matre, dum tamen Eva in qualibet muliere caveatur?[288]
>
> *Whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve (the temptress) that we must beware of in any woman.*

Augustine did not convert to his mother's faith in the way she had expected he would: she had arranged Augustine's (career-)marriage, and presumed that Augustine would marry, and then seek baptism. The fact that he partly thwarted her plans in this (minor?) area of wedlock and worldly ambition, while at the same time giving in to her dearest wish (becoming a *fidelis* within the Catholic Church), is another sign that Augustine had not so much surrendered to his mother, but that he did what he himself wanted to do, with God's blessing.[289] This is also the opinion of R. Holte:

> Psychologically, I certainly think that his wrestling with his mother's will is an important ingredient in the convertive process. Okay, he is going to be a Christian –and that is what his mother always dreamed and prayed for- but he will do it his own way, not the way his mother had devised![290]

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[286] AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* X. 19.

[287] *Conf.* V. viii (15): 'illis cruciatibus arguebatur in ea reliquiarium Evae, cum gemitu quaerens quod cum gemitu pepererat' ('*These agonies proved that there survived in her the remnants of Eve, seeking with groaning for the child she had brought forth in sorrow*').

[288] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* CCXLIII.10. The letter illustrates Augustine's detached view on the relationship of a son with his mother, which has to be subordinated to his relationship with God.

[289] Augustine did not realize then that it would only be a temporary blessing: a few years later, he was ordained presbyter, and had to give up his contemplative life.

[290] R. Holte, 'Monica, "The Philosopher"', *Augustinus* 39 (1994), 293-316 (p. 303).

## 2. Turning the tables: the way of reason (not simple faith) to God at Cassiciacum

Another way of retaining his own identity against his dominating mother was that Augustine firmly resolved upon a life in philosophy, thereby choosing the path of reason, not merely authority, to obtain Wisdom (i.e. God). He thereby distanced himself from Monnica's sole reliance on her simple faith. Also during the stay at Cassiciacum, in the presence of Monnica, Augustine demonstrates this same confidence and sense of own identity independent of his mother's. He can go against her when she rebukes Licentius for singing a psalm on the toilet: by using his literary imagination, he can turn the lavatory into an apposite spot to sing the psalm.[291] I find it difficult to conclude from reading these dialogues that, as some would have it, Monnica was at Cassiciacum 'as awesome as ever'.[292] On the contrary, she seemed to have lost her grip on Augustine, and consequently also on her own life, now that she cannot invest her whole being in a deep emotional relationship with her son.

Suddenly her impact on Augustine has shrunk, because he had changed the rules of interaction in all his relationships by adopting a continent life in the broadest sense. Her son is now very much engaged with philosophy, of which she does not know much about. To put it differently: Augustine did not embrace Lady Continence in his vision during his conversion pangs; instead he embraced Lady Philosophy.[293] Now, Monnica depends on him to be appreciated, and not ridiculed or dismissed, because others (among whom the readers of the dialogue) potentially had a more denigrating attitude towards her. Within the philosophical world Augustine is the superior of his mother, even though he says he is glad to be a pupil of her, because of her divinely inspired answers. He has disconnected her from himself, by letting God stand in between him and her, a God whom he approaches mainly through his reason (philosophy), while Monnica has chosen the path of pure faith. Augustine has to defend his philosophical approach of "her" religion: most of the debates at Cassiciacum his mother has difficulties to follow, until Augustine explains it in simpler

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[291] AUGUSTINE, *De ordine* I. viii (22-23).

[292] P. Brown 2000, p. 111.

[293] AUGUSTINE, *Soliloquia* I. xii (21) Augustine wishes to see and embrace Wisdom naked, with no veil to come between, with a most chaste look: '[Sapientia], quam castissimo conspectu atque complexu nullo interposito velamento quasi nudam videre ac tenere desideras'; AUGUSTINE, *De Academicis* I. i (3), where he took refuge in the lap of Philosophy, who now nourishes and cherishes him in his leisure: 'in Philosophiae gremium confugere coegisset. Ipsa me nunc in otio nutrit ac fovet'. E.T. Silk rightly sees a link between his Lady Philosophy in Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* and Augustine's presentation of her in the Cassiciacum dialogues (E.T. Silk, 'Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* as a Sequel to Augustine's Dialogues and *Soliloquia*', *The Harvard Theological Review* 32 (1939), 19-39).

wording.[294] When she hears something which she can recognize in her faith, she jumps up, and responds to it (at the end of *De beata vita*).

Some psychologists think that at his conversion Augustine finally surrendered to his mother, and gave up his true self.[295] However, this has been rightly disputed,[296] and, I, too, believe that Augustine comes out of his conversion experience much stronger than he was before. He emerges as someone, who henceforth is determined not to let other people decide what he should do, and instead to follow his own God-given path. Even at the conversion Augustine surprised his mother, because she had merely hoped that Augustine would become baptized. He can now state that God had chosen to convert him in a different way: to a monastic life.

### 3. The third garden scene (at Ostia): the fruition of a shared ecstatic vision[297]

Augustine has a brief experience together with Monnica of a vision of God a few weeks before her death.[298] In what could be regarded as the third garden scene of the autobiographical part of *Confessiones*, Augustine safely unites with his mother, without being annihilated by her. From a (Neo-)Platonic point of view a joint ascent to the One is impossible. There, the ascent is between the individual and God. Augustine has now built further on this concept. In a joint ascent to God he achieves a close intimacy with his mother, without losing his true self. The unification happens within the security of God's presence, whereby two pious people surrender themselves completely to the same entity, namely God. They have finally found a safe place where they unconditionally can unite. It demonstrates the success of Augustine's newly discovered life.

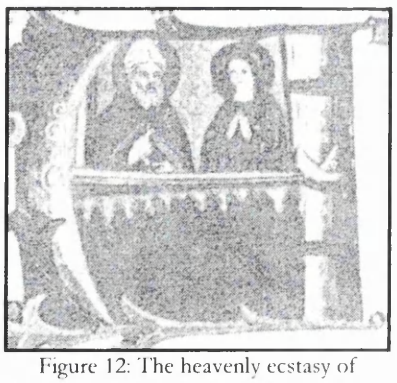
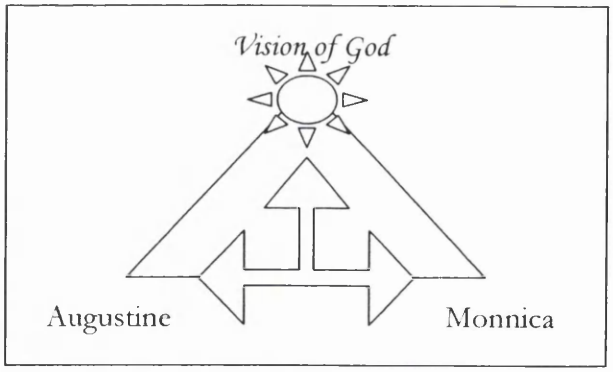


Figure 12: The heavenly ecstasy of Augustine and Monnica at Ostia *(15th c.)*




[294] For instance, *De beata vita* iii (19).
[295] Ch. Kligerman 1957 is an important voice in this position.
[296] For instance, D. Burrell 1990: 'This simple solution [*sc.* Augustine surrenders to his mother] runs counter to the obvious creativity of Augustine's subsequent life' (p. 139).
[297] R. Brändle & W. Neihardt, 'Lebensgeschichte und Theologie: Ein Beitrag zur psychohistorischen Interpretation Augustins', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 40 (1984), 157-189 (p. 164); Anne Hawkins 1985, p. 40.
[298] *Conf.* IX. x (23).

The difficulty with the account given in *Confessiones* of this joint assent is that we only read Augustine's (coloured) experience of this event.[299] He could hardly have shared at the time the (Neo-)Platonic idiom with his mother, who was not familiar with it. It is his interpretation, which has come down to us. What is presented as a discourse between two equal partners, who were inspiring each other, and gradually raising each other to a higher level, until both reach the flash of wordless ecstasy, may well have been, due to Monnica's lack of philosophical education, Augustine providing all or most of the talking, reducing his mother's contribution to the role of listener and seconder. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the two paths, reason and authority, could indeed lead to the same goal.

If we focus on the three garden scenes, combined with the two tree episodes, following overall structure in *Confessiones* reveals itself.[300]

| ***Garden of Thagaste*** | ***Garden of Milan*** | ***Garden of Ostia*** |
|---|---|---|
| *Pear tree/ (tree of good and evil)* | *fig tree* | |
| ⇩ | ⇩ | ⇩ |
| ***Eden*** | ***Blessed state of Nathaniel*** | ***Revelation*** |
| Fall | Conversion | Fruition |

There also emerges an arrangement of three visions, each one of them having Monnica and Augustine as protagonists, and arguably they all contain latent erotic elements.[301]

| **Monnica's dream** | → | **Augustine's vision** | → | **joint vision at Ostia** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *promise of being together* | | *"Lady Continence" seducing him to come to her* | | *unification* |

There is therefore some justification for reading *Confessiones* as an Oedipal drama, but the outcome is not so tragic for Augustine, who manages to salvage something of his true identity, and independency of his mother. Augustine was facing not so much castration

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[299] R. Holte, 'Monica, "the Philosopher"', *Augustinus* 39 (1994), pp. 293-296.

[300] Anne Hawkins 1985, pp. 40-41.

[301] Paula Fredriksen (1978, p. 211) disputes the erotic connotations of the vision at Ostia: 'As for the overwhelmingly orgiastic or erotic note sounded at Ostia, I simply do not hear it'. Nevertheless, the tone of the three visions is remarkably similar, and can perhaps best be described as "restrained eroticism".

anxiety, but fragmentation anxiety,[302] the fear of literally "going to pieces" due to a lack of sense of coherence.

### 4. THE DEATH OF MONNICA

One of the clearest signs how important Monnica was in Augustine's life, is that he stops his historical overview of his past with her death, and does not even mention his ordination! It further illustrates the important role Monnica played in Augustine's conversion.

A year after Augustine's baptism, Monnica dies (AD 388). If he would have waited to be baptised until after his planned marriage, Monnica's efforts and prayers might have come to nought after all to see her son becoming a *fidelis*. Her last words to Augustine are telling.

> fili, quantum ad me attinet, nulla re iam delector in hac vita. quid hic faciam adhuc et cur hic sim, nescio, iam consumpta spe huius saeculi. unum erat propter quod in hac vita aliquantum immorari cupiebam, ut te christianum catholicum viderem priusquam morerer. cumulatius hoc mihi deus meus praestitit, ut etiam contempta felicitate terrena servum eius videam. quid hic facio?
>
> *My son, as for myself, I now find no pleasure in this life. What I have still to do here and why I am here, I do not know. My hope in this world is already fulfilled. The one reason why I wanted to stay longer in this life was my desire to see you a Catholic Christian before I die. My God has granted this in a way more than I had hoped. For I see you despising this world's success to become his servant. What have I to do here?*[303]

It was her only wish in life to see her son a 'christianus catholicus', and everything she did seemed to have been done to that purpose. On the other hand, we see also Augustine's deep (worldly) attachment returning at her death: 'sauciabatur anima et quasi dilaniabatur vita, quae una facta erat ex mea et illius' (*'my soul was wounded, and my life as it were torn to pieces, since my life and hers had become a single thing'*).[304] Augustine wished to cry: *'something of the child in me, which had slipped towards weeping, was checked and silenced by the youthful voice, the voice of my heart'*.[305] Again, the inner, damaged child understandably seemed to want to emerge at this point, but this time it was checked by the more adult Augustine. These tears he could only shed at a time when he was alone, well, not really alone, because *'it was Your Ears that were there, not those of some human critic who would put a proud interpretation on my weeping'*.[306] God proved to be Augustine's ideal companion, because He looked after his true inner self. He

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[302] V. Gay, 'Augustine: The Reader as Selfobject', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25.1 (1986), 64-75 (p. 67).
[303] *Conf.* IX. x (26). Significantly, Augustine cannot remember what he replied to her (*Conf.* IX. xi (27)).
[304] *Conf.* IX. xii (30). The emotional language recalls the episode of the death of his friend, and the separation with his concubine.
[305] *Conf.* IX. xii (29).
[306] *Conf.* IX. xii (33).

would never leave Augustine, nor turn away from him. God was, to say it in the words of E. Dittes, fail-safe to trust.[307]

## 4.3. Writing *Confessiones*

This psychological analysis of Augustine also leads to some inferences from writing *Confessiones*. As D. Capps states, 'the very idea that one's personal story is of interest to others is inherently narcissistic, and Augustine is generally credited with having originated the genre of autobiography'.[308] Augustine was as much obsessed with his own identity as with his search for God: 'Cognoscam te, cognitor meus, cognoscam, sicut cognitus sum' ('*I would know You, my knower; I would know You as I am known*').[309] For W.C. Spengemann these words indicate 'an association between God and Augustine's true self'.[310] For K.B. Steinhauser 'the thirteen books of the *Confessions* represent Augustine's search for identity'.[311] He points out that the work is a closed text, with only one valid interpretation.[312] This becomes necessary if he wishes to solidify his true identity: it is not open for different interpretations, because this can undermine his self-confidence. His viewpoint is that 'autobiography is the intensely personal act not of discovering but of creating oneself in the process of writing'.[313]

Figure 13: *Bishop Augustine offers his Confessiones to Christ (12th c.)*

V. Gay describes *Confessiones* as 'a selfobject generated by Augustine to consolidate a newly won sense of coherence'.[314] 'This sense of growing trust that his life was indeed in the

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[307] J.E. Dittes, 'Augustine: Search for a Fail-Safe God to Trust', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25.1 (1986), 57-63.

[308] D. Capps, 'Augustine as Narcissist: Comments on Paul Rigby's 'Paul Ricoeur, Freudianism, and Augustine's *Confessions*', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53.1 (1985), 115-127 (p. 121).

[309] *Conf.* X. 1. (1).

[310] K.B. Steinhauser, 'The Literary Unity of the *Confessions*' in *Augustine from Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. by Joanne McWilliam and Th. Barnes (Waterloo (Ontario): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), pp. 15-30 (p. 24). He refers to the work of W.C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); T.R. Wright, *Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 98: 'Augustine's choice of an autobiographical format involves a recognition that "a person's understanding of God is interwoven with his personal development", and part of his self-understanding'.

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[312] See also his other article 'Augustine's Autobiographical Covenant: A Contemporary Reading of His *Confessions*', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 18.3 (1991), 233-240.

[313] K.B. Steinhauser 1991, p. 235.

[314] V. Gay, 'Augustine: The Reader as Selfobject', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 (1) (1986), 64-75 (p. 68).

hands of God allowed Augustine a unified conception of his existence. Throughout the book he confesses this trust as God's gift to him'.[315]

Augustine was in need of God to gather and hold together his diffused identity. His view on God's grace and predestination were the pillars on which he based his mastering of his fragmentation anxiety. No wonder that he felt so threatened when others questioned these tenets. Augustine strengthened his newly won sense of coherence by perceiving the order and purpose of divine providence behind the many "*Fortuna*" incidents of his past. Any doubt on God's overwhelming control, and any notion of human self-determinacy, which would negate man's utter dependency on God, was likely to crumble the secure stone upon which Augustine rested his unified identity. It would leave him again exposed to external, uncontrollable forces, which threatened to take to pieces his sense of self-coherence, as they had done in the past.

> Neque [...] invenio tutum locum animae meae nisi in te, quo conligantur sparsa mea nec a te quicquam recedat ex me.[316]
>
> *I can find no safe place for my soul except in You. There my dispersed aspirations are gathered together, and from You no part of me will depart.*

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[315] K.J. Weintraub 1990, p. 19.
[316] *Conf.* X. xl (65).

# CHAPTER IV

# *DE CIVITATE DEI:*

# GOD'S SALVATION PLAN FOR HIS ELECT FEW

> *The experience of mankind in general, as far as God's people is concerned, is comparable to the experience of the individual man. There is a process of education, through the epochs of a people's history, as through the successive stages of a man's life, designed to raise him from the temporal and the visible to an apprehension of the eternal and the invisible.*
>
> AUGUSTINE (*De civitate Dei* X.14)

## 1. INTRODUCING *DE CIVITATE DEI*

### 1.1. *Confessiones* and *De civitate Dei*

This last chapter on *Fortuna* in Augustine's work revolves around his masterpiece *De civitate Dei* (AD 413-426). Marjorie Suchocki perceives a fundamental link between Augustine's two best-known works: 'The *Confessions* should take its place as a precursor and companion to *City of God*, for each uses its own distinctive mode to tell the same story'.[1] Such a view demonstrates just how important Augustine's personal experiences in life were in the formation of his theology, and particularly in his ideas about the two cities. It is even possible, as J.J. O'Meara and G. Pfliggersdorfer suggest, to see anticipations of this grand theme in the introduction of *De beata vita*: the imagery of the proud mountain blocking

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[1] Marjorie Suchocki, 'The Symbolic Structure of Augustine's *Confessions*', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50 (1982), 365-378 (p. 377). Joanna V. Scott, 'Augustine's Razor: Public vs. Private Interests', in *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. with an introduction by Dorothy F. Donnelly (New York: Lang, 1995), p. 155: 'As well as *The City of God*, the *Confessions* explores the tragic consequences of the opacity of human relationships'. S. Peetz believes that Augustine made a basic difference between the power of knowledge and the power of will, which stood at the core of both *Confessiones* and *De civitate Dei* (S. Peetz, 'Augustin über menschliche Freiheit (Buch V)' in *Augustinus: De civitate Dei*, reissued by C. Horn (Klassiken Auslegen band 11) (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), pp. 53-86; see also the earlier quoted passage of J.J. O'Meara (introduction) & H. Bettenson (translation), *St Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (London: Penguin Group: 1984), p. xvii.

almost completely the entrance of the haven of philosophy, where alone the region of the happy life should be situated, can be regarded as a forerunner of the *civitas terrena*, wherein *superbia* rules.[2] *'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'* (James 4:6) was the basic theme of both *Confessiones* and *De civitate Dei*. In the latter work, Augustine juxtaposed this Bible verse with Virgil's *Aeneid* (VI. 853): *'To spare the conquered, and beat down the proud'*. This open confrontation between the two ideologies accounts for the fact that, unlike *Confessiones*, *De civitate Dei* contains many references to *Fortuna* (even the most in a single work: thirty-two):[3] the audience, once again determined the vocabulary and style of his work.


***Figure 14*: The two cities, *manuscript* (AD 1489)**

The calamity of the sack of Rome (24th of August AD 410) by the Goth Alaric became three years later the mere starting point for this *magnum opus et arduum*.[4] Augustine organized and synthesised his thoughts in what became an impressive defence of the Catholic faith against his (pagan) opponents. It contained the final answer to certain pagan intellectuals, who embodied the last significant voice to restore the time-honoured customs of their venerable Rome.[5] Their cause had recently received several blows; they saw the plea of Symmachus to restore the altar of the goddess Victoria (AD 383) in their senate in Rome come to nothing, mainly through the shrewd manoeuvring of bishop Ambrose in Milan;[6] in a law of 24 February AD 391, the (eastern) emperor Theodosius had banned all pagan

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[2] J.J. O'Meara (introduction), and H. Bettenson (translation), *St Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (London: Penguin Group: 1984), pp. xv-xvii; G. Pfligersdorffer, 'Bemerkungen zu den Proömien von Augustins *Contra Academicos* I und *De beata vita*' in *Augustino Praeceptori: Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Augustins: zum 1600 Jahre Jubliaüm der Taufe Augustins* (Salzbrug: Abakus, 1987), pp. 33-58 (esp. pp. 50-53).

[3] The first part of this thesis has shown that the concept of *Fortuna* played a considerable role in Roman ideology; see *Appendix B* for a general overview of *Fortuna* references. *De Academicis* comes in second place (25). Since this dialogue is much shorter, relatively spoken, it mentions *Fortuna* most frequently.

[4] *De civ. Dei* II.2; J.J. O'Donnell argues that Augustine used the sack of Rome from the beginning of the work as a vehicle to defend his theological views not merely against the pagans but also against Christian schismatics (J.J. O'Donnell, 'The Inspiration for Augustine's *De civitate Dei*', *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979), 75-79 (pp. 78-79).

[5] See P. Brown, 2000, pp. 300-303.

[6] L.C. Ferrari even suggests that the enmity and tension between the two cities of Rome and Milan was a contemporaneous episode from which grew the first ideas for Augustine's *City of God* (L.C. Ferrari 'Background to Augustine's *City of God*', *Classical Journal* 67 (1971), 198-208.

sacrifices, and prohibited access to pagan temples;[7] the emperor also defeated the usurpers Eugenius and Flavianus, who attempted to overthrow the Christian rule in the West and desired to restore the pagan religion (battle at Frigidus on 6 September AD 394).[8]

The sack of Rome in AD 410 had given pagan intellectuals another reason to insist on the restoration of the traditional religious rites. They blamed Christianity for the recent disaster, believing that this foreign religion posed a real threat to the survival of Rome, their *urbs aeterna*.[9] The capture of Rome by a foreign foe - something which had not happened for nearly eight hundred years - was to them a clear attestation of the anger of the Roman gods for neglecting their worship.[10] Augustine met the challenge of his adversaries in a staggering way. He demolished in his *De civitate Dei* the Roman ideology at its very root,[11] and defended with vigour its Christian alternative, providing 'the ultimate vindication of Catholic orthodoxy'.[12] The impact of *De civitate Dei* was as great as its theme. For centuries it became the authority par excellence on a diversity of issues.

## 1.2. *Civitas Dei* and Cicero's *respublica*

### 1.2.1. A reliable *urbs aeterna*

The sack of Rome caused tremendous consternation and despair among pagans and Christians alike.[13] Belief and confidence in *Roma aeterna* were severely shaken, so that even the traditional frame of reference came under pressure. Augustine saw an opportunity to comfort demoralised and uncertain Romans by offering them a more reliable *urbs aeterna*:

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[7] J. Matthews *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 236, quoting *Codex Theodosius* XVI 10.10.

[8] Also Augustine refers to this event in *De civ. Dei* (V. 16). For a list of the "series of misfortunes' befalling the *respublica* from the viewpoint of pagans, when Christianity was officially accepted, see the polemical article of L.C. Ferrari, 'Background to Augustine's *City of God*', *Classical Journal* 67 (1971), 198-208 (pp. 198-200).

[9] *De civ. Dei* I.1; the problem was that they had no real alternative plan to restore the *respublica*, only despair(C. Starnes, 'Augustine's Audience in the First Ten Books of the City of God and the Logic of his Argument', in *Studia Patristica* 27 (Oxford 1991) (Leuven, 1993), pp. 388-393 (p. 390). The real causes of the sack were self-interest (the senate refused to pay Alaric subsidies, even though it could afford them), internal division (it came even to an open conflict between the imperial court at Milan and the senate of Rome, who saw their city prefect Attalus chosen by Alaric as rival (puppet) emperor), and unrealistic patriotism (fatally overestimating their military strength).

[10], Rome was sacked by the Gauls *c.* 386 BC; *De civ. Dei* II. 22.

[11] H. Hagendahl, 'Zu Augustins Beurteilung von Rom in *De civitate Dei*', *Wiener Studien* 79 (1966), 509-516 (pp. 515-516): 'Die schonungslose Kritk wendet sich vor allem gegen das Idealbild römischer Staatsanschauung das Cicero in *De republica* und Vergil in der *Aeneis*' (but see next section); on the idea that Christians, too, needed to be comforted and reassured, see C. Starnes 1993, p. 390.

[12] W.H.C. Frend, 'Augustine's Reactions to the Barbarian Invasions of the West, 407-417: Some Comparisons with his Western Contemporaries', *Augustinus* 39 (1994), 241-255 (p. 251).

[13] The response of Jerome in the East is often referred to, but rightly toned down by W.H.C. Frend (1994), since Jerome was always prone to exaggerate military disasters; Augustine's assessment was more realistic; on the distress of his own congregations, see, for instance, AUGUSTINE, *Sermones* 105 and 397.

*civitas Dei*, which '*stood in the security of its everlasting seat*'.[14] The title *De civitate Dei*[15] can be regarded as a direct challenge to Cicero's *De republica.* Devotion to the *civitas terrena* (Rome) was made secondary to that of the heavenly city (*civitas Dei*).[16] A Christian was a pilgrim in life, always bearing in mind the transitoriness of this world. He fixed his hope on this heavenly, eternal country.[17]

Augustine aimed to redirect the sentiments of patriotism and loyalty for Rome towards the *civitas Dei aeterna.* This heavenly society could be regarded as the ultimate (albeit modified) version of Cicero's ideal *respublica*, which, according to Augustine, was never realized at Rome, and could never really be established in this world.[18] True justice only existed in the *coelestis respublica*[19] with Christ as founder and ruler. Augustine invited pagans to join this superior Heavenly Society (through baptism and faith), of which God 'Nec metas rerum, nec tempora ponet, imperium sine fine dabit' (*'will fix no bounds of space or time, but will bestow an empire without end'*).[20] He further encouraged the link with the traditional *respublicea* by drawing a parallel even in the way the two cities were being populated: the promise of remission of sins with which citizens of the *civitas Dei* were recruited has a shadowy resemblance in the asylum of Romulus, where a multitude was gathered on the promise of impunity for crimes.[21] Also the role model of traditional *exempla* was being transferred to the Christian ideology: Augustine urged his Christian readers to be inspired by heroic exempla of Roman civic *virtus* (such as Regulus) '*to toil equally hard for their* superna patria, propter vitam aeternam'.[22] By recalling the nobility of these ancient Romans, he invites their current descendants to consider membership in the *respublica* of the true God.[23] As much as *civitas Dei* was presented as the fulfilment of Cicero's *respublica* before an

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[14] H. Hagendahl 1966, p. 516: 'Sein wahres Vaterland ist das himmlische'; *De civ. Dei* I. *praefatio*:. 'in illa stabilitate sedis aeternae'.

[15] Medieval copyists added "Contra paganos" to the original title.

[16] *De civ. Dei* II. 29. G.J.P. O'Daly, 'Thinking through History: Augustine's Method in the *City of God* and its Ciceronian Dimension', *Augustinian Studies* 30.2 (1999), 45-57.

[17] *De civ. Dei* I.9: 'qui in hoc mundo peregrinantur et spem supernae patriae prae se gerunt'.

[18] J.L. Treloar, 'Cicero and Augustine: The Ideal Society', *Augustinianum 28* (1988), 565-590 (p. 590): 'Augustine uses the Ciceronian structure of the ideal society found in the *De Republica* to explain the *City of God* in its final realization, that is, the city as it exists after the final judgment'.

[19] *De civ. Dei* II. 19.

[20] *De civ. Dei* II. 29, quoting VIRGIL, *Aeneid* I. 278-279; see also AUGUSTINE, *Sermones* 105, where the same quote of Virgil is being used (105.10), and 'where the city in which we are born in the flesh is said to pass away one day, but the city which gave us birth in the spirit remains standing'.

[21] *De civ. Dei* V. 17; in *De civ. Dei* I. 34 a further link is made between Romulus' asylum and the decision of Alaric - 'the destroyer of Rome' - to spare the Romans who sought refuge in the churches, turning them into a kind of asylum.

[22] R.J. Goar, 'Reflections on some Anti-Roman Elements in *De civitate Dei*', *Augustinian Studies* 19 (1988), 71-84 (p. 74); P.S. Hawkins, 'Polemical Counterpoint in *De civitate Dei*', *Augustinian Studies 6* (1975), 97-106 (p. 103).

[23] P.C. Burns, 'Roles of Roman rhetorical exempla in Augustine's *City of God*', in *Studia Patristica* 38 (Oxford 1999) (Leuven, 2001), pp. 31-40 (p. 37). On the fundamental difference between the Christian hero and the pagan hero which remains, see L.J. Swift, 'Pagan and Christian Heroes in Augustine's *City of God*', *Augustinianum 27* (1987), 509-522.

intellectual pagan audience, Augustine has made it clear at the start that *civitas Dei* was founded on a completely different (moral) basis: *humilitas* as opposed to *superbia*.[24]

### 1.2.2. Modifications of Roman ideology under impulse of *Fortuna*

It is possible to draw sweeping conclusions from Augustine's representation of *civitas Dei* 'in its final seat' as a remodelled version of the (traditional) *respublica*. In describing its destination many aspects of the traditional Roman *respublica* appear to re-emerge: there will be grades of true honour and glory, this time justly distributed, i.e. appropriate to the degrees of merit, in sum: each will be given his/her due. The reward of *virtus* will be God himself, Who also gives the *virtus*.[25]

This brings us back to the first part of this thesis.[26] Cicero complained in his lifetime that the name of *respublica* was being maintained, but not its reality, through loss of justice.[27] In an unjust society not everybody was given his fair due, in particular, the reward for exercising one's *virtus* became unreliable: *Fortuna caeca* was doing its destructive work in society, and fewer people were inclined to exercise their *virtus* if their reward became uncertain.

The *principate* could restore some kind of order, security and stability. It also preserved at its core republican ideology (*pro forma*), while it actually was a kingdom in (poor) disguise. This curtailed the freedom of the senators, who in effect had lost control over "their" *respublica*. The discrepancy between (political) reality and promoted ideology could only be accounted for by a whimsical *Fortuna caeca*. The fundamental link between exercising one's *virtus* and receiving one's traditional reward (glory, honour), remained thereby profoundly disturbed. The reaction of the nobility to this new situation was resistance, withdrawal (Epicureans), or the Stoic approach: trying to stick to the guidelines of the traditional

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[24] AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei* I Praefatio: 'Rex enim et conditor civitatis huius, de qua loqui instituimus, in scriptura populi sui sententiam divinae legis aperuit, qua dictum est: "Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam". Hoc vero, quod Dei est, superbae quoque animae spiritus inflatus adfectat amatque sibi in laudibus dici: "Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos"' (*'For the King and the Founder of this City of which we are resolved to speak has revealed a maxim of the divine law in the Scriptures of His people, where it is said, 'God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble'. But the swollen fancy of the proud-spirited envies even this utterance, which belongs to God, and loves to hear the following words spoken in its own praise: "To spare the humble and subdue the proud"'*).

[25] *De civ. Dei* XXII. 30: 'Praemium virtutis erit ipse qui virtutem dedit' (The reward of *virtus* will be God himself, who gave the *virtus*'). On God himself being the reward, see J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, rev. edn (Norwich: the Canterbury Press: 1991), pp. 239-250.

[26] What follows can be regarded as a summary of the findings of the first part, but then tailored to this particular chapter on *De civitate Dei*.

[27] CICERO, *De republica* 5.1; 'Nostris enim vitiis, non casu aliquo, rempublicam verbo retinemus; reipsa vero jam pridem amisimus' Augustine will subscribe to Cicero's idea of justice being the guarantee of concord in a community, which is the best and closest bond of security in a country (*De civ. Dei* II. 21; Cicero *De republica* II. 42f.). See also E.L. Fortin, 'Justice as the Foundation of the Political Community: Augustine and his Pagan Models', in *Augustinus: De civitate Dei* (Klassiken Auslegen 11) (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), pp. 43-62.

*respublica* and face the buffetings of a *Fortuna caeca*. Even Seneca began to envisage another, more universal *respublica* with its own ultimate duties. Some preferred serving this *respublica*, because they found fault with the *respublica* in which they were born.[28] Lucan rejected the imperial solution (even though there was no real alternative for it); he considered the *respublica* completely destroyed. In his eyes, not *fatum*, but *Fortuna* ruled the world.

Within (Neo-)Platonism, aspects of the traditional ideal were to some extent being preserved, not least in its elitist thinking, but also with the *virtus* - reward link. The true aim was not worldly prosperity, but the vision of God, achieved by one's personal efforts. However, (Neo-)Platonism was very much an atomistic, self-interested philosophy. It sought to break with the material world (and thus also with society as a whole), because it believed happiness could not be found there: a contemplative life was deemed superior to a public active life.

Augustine presented the Romans in *De civitate Dei* with an alternative that would restore their ancient ideal to the highest degree in a *coelestis respublica*. It offered a more complete ideal life than (Neo-)Platonism, because of the resurrection of the body, and the social character of its happy life.[29] Even the elitist character of the Roman *respublica* was being preserved, since in the *coelestis respublica*, there were gradations of honour and glory, this time without causing envy. *Civitas Dei* became the (final) answer to eradicate *Fortuna caeca*'s destructive and unruly behaviour within the Roman *respublica*; in that other, superior *respublica*, true justice ruled in all its splendour: *virtus* was justly rewarded, and glory and honour given according to worth.

## 2. REJECTING *FORTUNA* IN ROMAN RELIGION

In the first five books of *De civitate Dei*, Augustine seeks to disprove that it is necessary to worship the Roman gods for any temporal blessings, let alone that these "demons" – because that is what they are - could have assisted Rome in its growth to become a world power. He will argue that only the Christian God is in charge of temporal goods. In his list of protective Roman gods Augustine discusses briefly two (arguably three[30]) ancient cults of *Fortuna*.

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[28] SENECA, *De otio* IV.1.

[29] Compare the essentially social character of Augustine' vision of God at Ostia, shared by both he and Monnica, with the individual ascent of Plotinus (section 3.2.3. in the chapter on *Confessiones*) See also concerning the social character of the Heavenly reward: J. Burnaby 1991, p. 248, referring to *De civ. Dei* XIV; XXII.30 and XIX.13; see also *De civ. Dei* XIX. 5.

[30] Augustine mentions also in the same list as *Fortuna Barbata*, *Fortuna* without cognomen. This instance will be discussed further on.

# 2.1. Ridiculing the Religious Cults of *Fortuna*

## 2.1.1. Why *Fortuna* Should Have Been a Man

### 1. *FORTUNA BARBATA*

The rather obscure *Fortuna Barbata* appears in a list of deities who were supposed to protect a person from conception to adulthood.[31] Augustine thought she was worshipped 'to equip the young men with beards'.[32] *Fortuna Barbata* could be regarded as the male counterpart of *Fortuna Mammosa*: both manifested themselves in the development of the human body.[33] Like *Fortuna Virilis* and the goddess *Iuventas*,[34] she made sacral a boy's physiological transition of puberty and marked the integration within the social group of adults.[35] She probably was linked with the rite of *depositio barbae*, the solemn shaving of the first beard, which was offered to a protecting deity.[36] That the first beard growth of a boy may have been considered important is hinted at in Petronius' *Satyricon*: Trimalchio preserved his first beard shavings in an impressive gold casket, offering it to the *Lares*.[37] Nero dedicated his first shavings to the Capitoline Jupiter.[38] In ancient times, perhaps *Fortuna Barbata* used to be the recipient.

Augustine depreciatively ridicules the idea of a female goddess *Fortuna Barbata*. He vividly pictures the statue of such a deity, "a woman with a beard", and suggests that the pagans better had chosen a male figure called *Barbatus*, *Nodutus* or *Fortunius* to denote the deity presiding over beard growth.[39] Nothing suggests, however that the statue of *Fortuna Barbata* (none has come down to us) would have depicted the goddess with a beard. This peculiar cult can be seen as a logical outcome of expanding the province of the agricultural

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[31] *De civ. Dei* IV. 11; we know her only from this work and from Tertullian (*Adversus nations* II. 11, 11). W. Otto says that we must be careful in accepting these references to *Fortuna Barbata* as truthful, since she comes to us only via the Church fathers (W. Otto, s.v. *Fortuna*, in *RE* VII.1 (1910), 12-42 (36)). However, Augustine, like Tertullian, who mentions the same deities, usually bases his knowledge of pagan gods on Varro's work, so that also this ancient deity must have had a place in the "Encyclopaedia of Roman gods" (Jacquline Champeaux 1982, p. 396.).

[32] *De civ. Dei* IV. 11: 'quae adultos barba induat'.

[33] Jacquline Champeaux 1982, I, p. 397.

[34] *De civitate Dei* IV. 11.

[35] Jacquline Champeaux 1982, I, p. 400.

[36] This was probably a similar ritual like the handing over of the *toga praetexta* to assume the *toga virilis*, perhaps the two were even connected (see the next footnote).

[37] PETRONIUS, *Satyricon* 29: 'pyxis aurea non pusilla, in qua barbam ipsius conditam esse dicebant'. Sullivan comments: 'The first shave was symbolic of a boy's reaching man's estate and donning the toga *virilis*. The event was celebrated, and the trimmings might be put in a box dedicated to a god at some temple'. (*Petronius: The Satyricon* (Penguin Classics), n. 4., p. 189. Jacqueline Champeaux (1982, I, p. 437) thinks that at Rome *Fortuna* controlled the passage from one age group to the other. The idea of *Fortuna Barbata*, fits perfectly in this picture

[38] SUETONIUS, *Nero* 12.4.

[39] *De civ. Dei* IV. 11.

fecundity goddess *Fortuna* to numerous other spheres in life, especially where a form of transition was involved.

#### 2. *FORTUNA MULIEBRIS*

Another cult of *Fortuna* to which Augustine pays attention, is the cult of *Fortuna Muliebris*.[40] Here, he focuses on a miracle that apparently occurred: the statue spoke at its inauguration.[41] Augustine derisively comments, that *Fortuna* is here presented as a chatterer.

> Et certe si Fortuna loquitur, non saltem Muliebris, sed Virilis potius loqueretur, ut non ipsae, quae simulacrum dedicaverunt, putarentur tantum miraculum muliebri loquacitate finxisse.[42]
>
> *In any case, if Fortuna speaks, then it would have been better to have Fortuna Virilis speaking, not Fortuna Muliebris; for then it would not be suspected that this impressive miracle was a piece of female gossip.*

Augustine again pokes fun at *Fortuna* being a female goddess. This criticism is also rather cheap. He follows loosely Lactantius in suggesting that such miracles were the work of demons.[43] It would nevertheless be wrong to push this identification too far: Augustine makes a difference between God willing certain events to happen, and allowing certain events to pass. *Fortuna* is being dissolved into, on the one hand God's grace, and on the other hand, minor demons, whom God allows some power ("to do evil").[44] Both aspects nevertheless fall within God's providence, because He brings good out of evil.[45]

### 2.1.2. Meddling with religious *Fortuna* and literary *Fortuna caeca*

#### 1. THE ORIGINAL GODDESS *FORTUNA*?

In the chronological list of deities protecting the growing up infant, also *Fortuna* without any epithet appears. Attacking the polytheism of the Romans, Augustine argues that an all-powerful Jupiter should have replaced all these deities. Significantly, *Fortuna* comes after the goddess *Carmentes*, 'quae fata nascentibus canunt' (*'who foretells the fate of the newly-born'*).

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[40] *De civ. Dei* IV. 19. It cannot be coincidence, that also the African Tertullian focuses on these two cults of *Fortuna* (*Fortuna Muliebris* and *Fortuna Barbata*) on which (*Ad Nat.* II. 2 and *De Monog.* XVII); references taken from J.C. Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune in the Early Middle Ages* (Studien und Texte sur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 23) (Leiden: Brill, 1988), p. 21. Clearly Augustine used him and Lactantius as an important Christian source to ridicule the Roman pantheon.

[41] This was also told buy VALERIUS MAXIMUS I. 8, 4.

[42] *De civ. Dei* IV. 19.

[43] Lactantius (*Divine Institutes* III, 29, 17) equated *Fortuna* with the enemy of God, the Devil.

[44] For instance, at the miracle of the talking statue of *Fortuna Muliebris* (*De civ. Dei* IV. 19). On God allowing demons some power, see *De civ. Dei* VII. 25, and, above all, x. 21 and x. 16. On the other hand he delegates some of His power to the angels, and, as was the case with the "*tolle, lege*" incident, Augustine believed that this event did not come from a demon, but from God. Here, what would be called *Fortuna*, became God's grace. See also *De civ. Dei* V.9, where Augustine argues that fortuitous causes (from the same root as *Fortuna*), are actually hidden causes and he attributes them to the will, either of the true God, or of spirits of some kind.

[45] *De civ. Dei* VII. 35; X. 21.

Augustine continues: 'praesit fortuitis, voceturque Fortuna' (*'let him [i.e. Jupiter] be called Fortuna, the presiding deity of chances'*). Augustine straightforwardly identifies the ancient goddess *Fortuna* here with the literary concept *Fortuna caeca*. Placing her immediately after *Carmentes*, indicates that here something of her original meaning may have been preserved, seeing that the list contains only protecting deities. *Fortuna* was closely linked with birth and women, and presumably also with one's lot in life.[46] Jacqueline Champeaux uses this as further evidence of her thesis that *Fortuna*'s major functions originally were allotting births, passing on the "chances" decreed by the gods, and the human lots.[47]

## 2. Why Worshipping *Fortuna (Barbata)* is Pointless

At the beginning of book VI Augustine returns to the goddess *Fortuna Barbata*, as part of his argument that the pagan gods cannot bestow the temporal goods of their own particular allocated province: we do not see all of *Fortuna Barbata*'s worshippers with full-grown, beautiful beards, and her detractors with hairless chins. Many suppliants have no beard, or merely an ugly one, and are being ridiculed by the others.[48] Since he thinks that a beard is there merely for aesthetic purposes,[49] the meaning of *Fortuna Barbata* as a protecting deity for an important moment of transition in a boy's life can be seen already lost at the time of Augustine. A fine beard growth was independent of someone's status, it did not depend on your merit, yet, to have it, was desirable, merely because it was physically attractive. *Fortuna Barbata* could easily be perceived to be "*Fortuna-caeca*" *Barbata*, a goddess who randomly endows the youth with beards.

Augustine seems particularly keen to use the example of the cult of *Fortuna Barbata* to demonstrate the futility of worshipping the Roman gods to obtain temporal blessings. No doubt this was because of the existing confusion about this deity. *Fortuna* had been primarily a goddess of fecundity, with also protecting powers. In religious life, she always had an epithet, which specified her province, so that "*Fortuna*" herself never seems to have had a cult.[50] Only later did *Fortuna (caeca)* become a symbol of the disorder and malfunctioning of society, when the vital link between merit and reward was broken. The fact that she was at the same time worshipped in religion to obtain her favour, made her cult more vulnerable

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[46] See the first chapter of part I.
[47] Jacqueline Champeaux (1982, I, p. 437).
[48] *De civ. Dei* VI.2.
[49] Augustine, will refer to the purely aesthetic function of a man's beard at the end of *De civ. Dei* (XXII. 24).
[50] Where she seems to have had the general power over the universe, for instance as *Isis-Fortuna* (see also Apuleius' Golden Ass) and *Fortuna panthea*, it is still the question whether she was still not regarded as a goddess of good luck or of protection, rather than as blind chance. Remember that Apuleius says: '*You are now in the hands of a seeing Fortuna*'. For this misrepresentation by pagans themselves, see the passages quoted from Juvenal and Pliny.

to Augustine's criticism. The antiquated cult of *Fortuna Barbata* was to the greatest effect combined with the literary concept of *Fortuna (caeca)*, so that it indeed became futile to worship her. In this case, even the original meaning of *Fortuna Barbata* had been lost because of the identification of *Fortuna* with chance and randomness. J.G. Griffiths summarises the difference between the goddess *Fortuna* and the literary *Fortuna (caeca)* as follows:

> In representations connected with the cult of *Fortuna*, the goddess is shown with a cornucopia and rudder. Her blindness is not represented or mentioned, it seems, in such a context, but is a purely literary creation. In cult, on the contrary, a *Fortuna Respiciens* was known.[51]

Already the Latin comedy writer Terence may have (consciously) mixed the religious and literary concept of *Fortuna* to great effect.[52] Christian authors seized upon this muddle purely for apologetic purposes.[53]

### 3. *FORTUNA* AND THE *DI SELECTI*

Another rather poor argument in refuting the existence of *Fortuna* concerns her absence from the selected or principal gods (*di selecti*) despite the enormous powers attributed to her.[54] Augustine reasons as follows: Janus and Minerva belong to this select group of deities, but not *Felicitas* or *Virtus*. At least *Fortuna* should have held an eminent place among the *di selecti*, for the selection happened not according to merit, or as a reward for possessing exceptional virtues, on the basis of renown, or any rational principle of felicity. Therefore, since no reason can be found, mere chance must have been the principle behind the selection (ad istam nobilitatem non merito, sed fortuitu pervenerunt), which makes *Fortuna (caeca)*, of course, responsible for the procedure, for 'dicunt deam non rationabili dispositione, sed, ut temere acciderit, sua cuique dona conferre (*'they say this goddess grants favours to each person not by any rational principle of distribution but by the random luck of the draw'*). *Fortuna* indeed must have had "bad luck" on this occasion, since she did not manage to select herself![55]

Augustine mentions in this context the famous *Fortuna* passage of Sallust:

> Nam et vir disertissimus Sallustius etiam ipsos deos fortassis attendit, cum diceret: 'Sed profecto Fortuna in omni re dominatur; ea res cunctas ex libidine magis quam ex vero

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[51] J.G. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros: The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses book XI)* (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 39) (Leiden: Brill, 1975), p. 250. The fact also that the cults of *Fortuna* found their most devotees among the common people, may have contributed to the misunderstanding of the literati, who being influenced by the idea of *Fortuna/Tyche*, projected this idea back into religion.

[52] At a time, using *Fors Fortuna*, as a "Goddess Who Brings", but later uses simply *Fortuna*, as the fully developed goddess of chance. F.M. Lazarus, 'On the Meaning of *Fors Fortuna*: A Hint from Terence', *American Journal of Philology* 106 (1985), 359-367, (pp. 362-364).

[53] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 556.

[54] *De civ. Dei* VII. 3.

[55] *De civ.* Dei VII. 3: 'An ut illic esse non posset, nihil aliud etiam ipsa Fortuna, nisi adversam putanda est habuisse fortunam?'

> celebrat obscuratque'. Non enim possunt invenire causam cur celebrata sit Venus, et obscurata sit Virtus; cum ambarum ab istis consecrata sint numina, nec comparanda sint merita.[56]
>
> *It may be that the eloquent Sallust had those very gods in mind when he said: 'But Fortuna, without doubt, is the dominant power in all that happens; it is Fortuna that brings fame or obscurity, according to her whim rather than on the basis of true desert. For no one can find a reason why Venus should be held in honour and Virtue be hid in obscurity, although both are canonized deities, and their merits are very different.*

Augustine's attack on the cult of *Fortuna* seems overall inadequate. He often seeks his refuge in mere slander, ridiculing her gender, while profiting from the confusion between the religious "*Fortuna* who brings fecundity" with the more literary (and philosophical) concept of *Fortuna caeca* as 'the power behind blind chance'.[57] It makes one more aware of how cynically Augustine as a Manichee must have ridiculed the Catholic faith twenty-five years earlier. This time, however, Augustine will do more than merely attacking the religion of his enemies: he now will also defend the truth of his Catholic faith.

## 2.2. *The difference between Fortuna (caeca)* and *Felicitas*

At a certain point in his argument, Augustine judges that the Romans should only have worshipped the goddess *Felicitas* to obtain worldly blessings.[58] Why is there then also a goddess *Fortuna*, he wonders? She cannot even be a real deity, because Plato taught that gods were good without exception, and *Fortuna* was both good and bad. If *Fortuna* is always good, i.e. *Fortuna Bona*, then she must be the same as the goddess *Felicitas*.[59]

He expects his pagan opponents to have an answer ready:

> est causa, inquiunt: quia felicitas illa est, quam boni habent praecedentibus meritis; Fortuna vero quae dicitur Bona, sine ullo examine meritorum fortuitu accidit hominibus et bonis et malis, unde etiam Fortuna nominatur.[60]
>
> *'The reason is', they say, 'that Felicitas is what good men enjoy as a result of their previous merits; while Fortuna – what we call Fortuna Bona - happens to men, good and bad alike, without any weighing of their merits: it comes fortuitously, hence the name Fortuna'.*

*Felix* was to a certain extend connected with the duty someone held, while *Fortuna* was more linked purely with divine favour. N. Hinske links *felicitas* with *εὐδαιμονία* and *Fortuna* with *τύχη*,[61] but Jacqueline Champeaux prefers to connect *felicitas* with *εὐτυχία* (and *Fortuna* with *τύχη*), which comes close to *Fortuna Bona* and *Fortuna*, which is used here in

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[56] *De civ. Dei* VII. 3; SALLUST, *Bellum Catilinae* 8. 1; see part I, the chapter on Sallust, section 4.
[57] I. Kajanto 1981, p. 556.
[58] *De civ. Dei* IV. 18.
[59] *De civ. Dei* IV. 18.
[60] *De civ. Dei* IV. 18, which is also for the next two passages of Augustine.
[61] N. Hinske, 'Zwischen fortuna und felicitas: Glückvorstellungen im Wandel der Zeiten', *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 85 (1978), 317-330 (pp. 319-320).

the text.[62] N. Hinske's view preserves a distinction between *Fortuna Bona* and *Felicitas*, and this is what the pagans claimed. What seems certain is that *Felicitas* does not mean just good-luck as in a chance game, since some worth of the human agent is required in securing a fortunate result.[63] A passage of Cicero, preserved in Ammianus Marcellinus' work sees above all the worthiness of the aim as an important element in distinguishing *Felicitas* from *Fortuna*:

> Felicitas nequi enim quicquam aliud est nisi honestarum rerum prosperitas, vel ut alio modo definiam: Felicitas est Fortuna Adiutrix consiliorum bonorum.[64]
>
> *Felicitas is nothing but success in noble actions, or, in other words, Felicitas is Fortuna Adiutrix[65] in worthy policies.*

To Augustine the pagan answer makes no sense:

> quomodo ergo bona est, quae sine ullo iudicio venit et ad bonos et ad malos? Utquid autem colitur, quae ita caeca est, passim in quoslibet incurrens, ut suos cultores plerumque praetereat, et suis contemptoribus haereat? Aut si aliquid proficiunt cultores eius, ut ab illa videantur et amentur, iam merita sequitur, non fortuitu venit. Ubi est ergo definitio illa Fortunae? ubi est quod a fortuitis etiam nomen accepit? Nihil enim prodest eam colere, si Fortuna est. Si autem suos cultores discernit, ut prosit, Fortuna non est.
>
> *How can she [i.e. Fortuna] be good if she comes, without discrimination, to good and bad? What is the point of worshipping her if she is blind that she blunders into people at random, so that she often passes by her worshippers and attaches herself to those who disregard her? Otherwise, if her worshippers receive any advantage, if they are noticed and favoured by her, then she comes in consequence of merit and not fortuitously. So what has happened to the definition of Fortuna? What about the derivation of her name from fortuitous events?[66] If she really is Fortuna (i.e. luck) there is no advantage in worshipping her. If she discriminates in favour of her worshippers she is not Fortuna.*

We are reminded of the worshippers of *Fortuna Barbata*, who with a pathetic beard are the victim of ridicule by *Fortuna*'s detractors, who have a beautiful beard. This is the clearest instance of fusing the two *Fortuna* concepts together, which turns her into an absurd goddess.

Augustine gives a hint how *Fortuna* should properly be understood:

> an et ipsam, quo voluerit, Jupiter mittit? Colatur ergo ipse solus: non enim potest ei iubenti et eam quo voluerit mittenti Fortuna resistere. Aut certe istam mali colant, qui nolunt habere merita, quibus possit Dea Felicitas invitari'.
>
> *Is it the case that Jupiter sends her at his pleasure? If so, he should be worshipped alone; Fortuna cannot resist her biding, when she sends her where he wishes. Or at least let us leave her worship to the bad, who are not inclined to acquire the merits by which the goddess Felicitas could be attracted.*

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[62] Jacqueline Champeaux 1987, II, p. 222.
[63] W.W. Fowler, 'Caesar's Conception of *Fortuna*', *Classical Review* 17 (1903), 153-156.
[64] AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Historiae* XXI. 16, 13.
[65] For the existence of the epithet Adiutrix, see I. Kajanto 1981, p. 510. W. Hamilton (1986, p. 231) translates this passage as 'the good fortune that brings worthy aims to fruition'.
[66] Augustine uses (not for the first time) a wrong etymology to substantiate his point (*Fortuna* comes strictly spoken from *fors* > *ferre*, not from *fortuitus*), In this case, it does not matter much, because also with *fors* his argument would have worked, seeing that *fors* already had lost its original meaning, and had become "chance".

One of his arguments is that the Romans should have worshipped only one God for temporary blessings: almighty Jupiter, so that he next can make the step to the almighty Christian God. Only He controls *Fortuna*'s goods, so that if *Fortuna* really would have existed, she would have been in total service of the Christian God, who distributes such goods according to His just, providential order.

## 2.3. Augustine's Verdict on the Roman Pantheon

### 2.3.1. The Role of the Roman Gods in the Rise of Rome

Augustine also suggests in the course of his argumentation that the gods *Virtus* and *Felicitas*[67] would have been sufficient to worship. This duo reminds of the traditional answer to the question what had made Rome so great. If we replace *Felicitas* with *Fortuna* – and they were, according to Augustine, akin - then we arrive at the traditional combination of *virtus* and *Fortuna* to explain Rome's success.

In *De natura deorum* the view was expressed that Rome could never have been as great as it was '*had not the fullest measure of divine favour had been obtained for it*'.[68] In his *De republica* Cicero states that

> intellegesque non fortuito populum Romanum sed consilio et disciplina confirmatum esse, nec tamen adversante Fortuna.[69]
>
> *The Roman people became strong, not by chance, but through their own good sense and their firm system of values – though, granted, Fortuna has not been against them.*

We have seen in part I that also Polybius thought that religious devotion (of course to the Roman gods) had played a major part in Rome's success. This did not necessarily mean that they always thought that the gods themselves had such power. There seemed to have been a considerable awareness that it was the beneficial (psychological) effects of the rituals themselves, regardless whether these gods actually existed, which made Roman religious devotion such a huge asset to the empire. Augustine is almost completely silent about this.[70]

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[67] *De civ. Dei* IV. 21.
[68] CICERO, *De natura deorum* III. ii (5).
[69] CICERO, *De republica* II. 30.
[70] He does refer to this in *De civ. Dei* IV. 32, where he talks about intellectuals misleading the Roman people in matters of religion, to bind them tighter, as it were, to the citizen community, so that they might bring them under control and keep them there by the same technique' (the word *religio* was thought to come from *ligare*, 'tie together').

He also does not mention, for instance, Sallust's view that *deos negligere* was one of the factors that actually caused the breakdown of Roman society.[71]

### 2.3.2. The Link *virtus* - Reward Restored in a Peculiar Way

The attacks on *Fortuna* form part of a bigger plan in which Augustine tries to show that of all the deities the Romans worshipped, only *Felicitas* and *virtus* deserved it (books I-V).

Both should be regarded as gifts of God.

> si Felicitas virtutis est praemium, non dea, sed Dei donum est: si autem dea est, cur non dicatur et virtutem ipsam conferre; quandoquidem etiam virtutem consequi felicitas magna est?[72]
>
> *If Felicity is the reward of virtus, Felicity is not a goddess, but a gift of God. If Felicity is a goddess, why should Felicity not be said to confer virtus, since the acquisition of virtus is surely a great felicity?*

*Felicitas* is good, trustworthy and the only problem with her is that the gift rather than the true giver - the Christian God - is being worshipped. From this line of reasoning we can infer that *Fortuna* herself appears to be a very important rival of Augustine's deity. She only differs with *Felicitas* in that she is untrustworthy and gives completely at random, thus regardless of someone's merit. The contest between the pagan traditional gods and the Christian God has been boiled down to the issue: is there order in the universe, which includes, is there a clear link between *virtus*, and its reward, *felicitas*? If so, then *Fortuna* does not exist. But if such an order cannot be found, then not the Christian God, but rather *Fortuna caeca* governs the world. Augustine will save the link between *virtus* and *Felicitas*, but he considers both a gift from God. The reward of *virtus* is not worldly goods, such as riches or worldly glory, but *felicitas*, which consists in the vision of God. Since God not only gives the reward for *virtus* to man, which is *felicitas*, but also *virtus* itself, He is actually rewarding His own gift. The idea that *virtus* was God's gift was anathema to the Romans, who insisted that *virtus* was one's own:[73]

> Virtutem autem nemo umquam acceptam deo rettulit. Nimium recte; propter virtutem enim iure laudamur et in virtute recte gloriamur, quod non contingeret, si id donum a deo non a nobis haberemus.[74]

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[71] SALLUST, *BeCa* 10.14; This point has also been made by G.W. Trompf, 'Augustine's Historical Theodicy: The Logic of Retribution in *De civitate Dei*', in G. Clarke (ed.), *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (Singapore: Australian National University Press, 1990), pp. 291-322 (p. 309).

[72] *De civ. Dei* IV. 21.

[73] Penelope D. Johnson argues that actually, Augustine's understanding of *virtus* in *De civitate Dei* 'echoed its earliest meaning 'magic or miraculous power', because *virtus* was not derived from *vir*, but of something which carried the meaning of *mana*' (Penelope D. Johnson, '*Virtus*: Transition From Classical Latin to the *De Civitate Dei*', *Augustinian Studies* 6 (1975), 117-124).

[74] CICERO, *De natura deorum* III. xxxvi (86-87).

*But virtus no one ever imputed to a god's bounty. And doubtless with good reason; for our virtus is a just ground for others' praise and a right reason for our own pride, and this would not be so if the gift of virtus came to us from a god and not from ourselves.*

# 3. THE CHRISTIAN GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL ORDER

## 3.1. *Causa fortuita* and *causa fatalis: causa voluntaria*

At the end of book IV, Augustine has reached the verdict that the Roman gods had no power in causing the growth and duration of the Roman empire. However, other alternatives to *divina providentia* (*Christiana*) still remained within Roman ideology. It could have happened accidentally (*causa fortuita*), in the sense of events having no cause or not coming from any rational order ('quae vel nullas causas habent, vel non ex aliquo rationabili ordine venientes').[75] One could link this option with Epicureanism, but also with the belief in a capricious *Fortuna caeca*, if one believes in the existence of a *numen* behind the working of chance.[76] It may also have been decreed by 'destiny' (*causa fatalis*) 'quae praeter Dei et hominum voluntatem cujusdam ordinis necessitate contingunt') ('*which happen in an inevitable sequence, independent of God's or man's will*'). Augustine will consider in this category only astral fate. He has no problem with those who believe in (Stoic) *fatum*, as long as they understand *fatum* - coming from *fari* - to refer to the will, or power of the supreme (and therefore Christian) God.[77] This becomes only a matter of clarification, not of substance.[78]

Typically, Augustine does not waste much energy on refuting *causa fortuita*, while one could argue that *Fortuna* was, according to some, responsible for the supremacy of the Roman empire.[79] This was probably so, because Cicero, Plotinus, and also Lactantius thought the Epicurean idea that the universe was based on chance encounters, to be a ridiculous assumption.[80] Augustine simply argues that fortuitous causes are actually hidden

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[75] *De civ. Dei* V. 1.

[76] Augustine mentions in *De civ. Dei* V. 9 that *fortuita* comes from the same root as *Fortuna*.

[77] *De civ. Dei* V. 8.

[78] We have here the same division as in the well-know passage of Tacitus, who gave the same three possibilities: chance (Epicurean) or *fatum*, interpreted by some as Stoic fate, the will of God, and by others astral fate. Augustine almost solely will deal with astral fate.

[79] See part I, the chapter on Sallust.

[80] LACTANIUS, *Epitome Divinarum Institutionum* 1: 'Non solum a doctissimis viris, sed et omnium mortalium testimonies ac sensibus coarguitur Epicurus ('*Epicurus is refuted not only by the most learned men, but also by the testimonies and perceptions of all mortals*); PLOTINUS, *Enneads* II. i (1): '*To make the existence and coherent structure of this Universe depend upon automatic activity and upon chance is against all good sense*'). See also *De civ. Dei* X. 18, wherein he makes clear that he does not wish to argue with those 'who claim that there is no such thing as divine power, or maintain that it has no concern for human affairs' (which is the Epicurean position).

causes (*causae latentes*), to be attributed to the will either of God, or of spirits of some kind (so that they can be brought back to voluntary causes, *causae voluntariae*).[81]

To further substantiate his argument, Augustine will have to reveal how certain fortuitous events fit within an order of voluntary causes.[82] This will amount to revealing God's providential order in historical events, which is a task comparable to what he did with his life story in *Confessiones*.

## 3.2. Refuting Astrology

More often than not in Augustine's time is *fatum* understood as astral fate, i.e. the influence of the position of the stars at the time of birth of conception.[83] It makes worship and prayers pointless, because of its inescapability: from birth onwards, everything is set, and one cannot break away from one's lot in life. In *De civitate Dei*, Augustine lists three different conceptions of astral fate: either the stars decide, or else God decides and the stars implement, or thirdly, the stars only signify the events, but do not bring them about.[84] After swiftly rejecting the first two forms, he then devotes his attention to refuting the claim of the astrologers that they can (scientifically) read these signs, and thereby predict the future of any individual. He attacked astrology in several other works as well; from having been himself deeply infatuated with this superstition, he became its sternest and most scrupulous critic.[85]

### 3.2.1. Augustine's Earlier Infatuation with Astrology

The attention given to Augustine's infatuation with astrology somehow suffers from the substantial attention scholars devote to his Manichaean period, and his discovery of (Neo-)Platonism.[86] For at least as many years as he was a Manichee, Augustine was fascinated by the "science" (*ars*) of astrology. He studied their books, and was able to make predictions

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[81] *De civ. Dei* V. 9.

[82] Theoretically you can never prove such a point by listing examples, even if you gave an infinite number of examples which corroborates your point. For instance, you cannot "prove" that all integer numbers are even, by summing up a whole list of integer numbers which "happen to be" even: 2, 6, 18, 34, 46, etc.

[83] *De civ. Dei* V. 1.

[84] The latter is also Plotinus' view.

[85] T. O'Loughlin, 'The Development of Augustine the Bishop's Critique of Astrology, *Augustinian Studies* 30: 1 (1999), 83-103.

[86] For instance, in the nevertheless excellent study on Augustine of Carol Harrison, *Augustine. Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); L. Ferrari says the same: 'This [= duration of his adherence to astrology] would seem to imply that astrology had a much stronger hold over him [=Augustine] than Manichaeism; a possibility which is not generally recognized'. (L.C. Ferrari, 'Astronomy, Augustine, and the Manichees', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 19 (1973), 263-276 (pp. 268-9) & id. 'Augustine and Astrology', *Laval théologique et philosophique* 33 (1977), 241-251 (p. 241)).

for others.[87] E. Hendrickx thinks it likely that Augustine had already consulted astrologers before he became a Manichee.[88] He probably became interested sometime during his study at Carthage (*c.* AD 371), and he broke with it, only after he had abandoned Manicheism, i.e. between his thirtieth and thirty-second year.[89] His interest in astronomy, the scientific knowledge about the heavens, even helped him to doubt the fantastic Manichean myths about the heavens.[90] Two substantial passages in the *Confessiones* (IV. iii (4)-(5) and VII. vi (8)-(10)) deal explicitly with his preoccupation with astrology, and disclose how difficult it was for him to concede the falsity of its doctrine, and how much he was enthralled by its scientific grandeur. What astrology possessed to a much greater degree than Manicheism, was indeed its intellectual respectability, since its technique was based on the science of astronomy. The doctrine that somehow the stars were linked with the destiny of mankind was not that far removed from what Stoicism upheld.

In the first passage [*Conf.* IV. iii (4-5)], Augustine mentions that his fervent belief in astrology was based on the high success rate of its predictions, and on the great respect he had for the *auctoritas* of the writers on astrology. Vindicianus tried to convince Augustine that the art of astrology was bogus, and that its success was based on a force which also could be seen at work in sortilege (*sors/fors*), so that all the learned science of astrology was actually irrelevant.[91] However, he could not convince Augustine to abandon his passion for astrology with this argument.

It took several years before another friend, Firminus, could prove to Augustine that astrology was a hoax. Augustine would make use of his argument in almost every attack on the principles of astrology (see table on the next page), in particular in *De civiate Dei* (V. 26).

### 3.2.2. The Twin Argument

What eventually freed Augustine from this deadly superstition was the failure of the technique to explain the often completely different lives of people born at the same time and in the same place – hence called the "twin argument"[92] – since they inevitably have the same horoscope. This has nothing to do anymore with the competence of the astrologer, but it points at an intrinsic failure of the science itself. Augustine pondered upon the story

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[87] Augustine's infatuation with astrology may well have started before he became a Manichee (L.C. Ferrari 1977, p. 246). It certainly ended after he had already come to reject Manicheism (*Conf.* VII. vi (8)).
[88] E. Hendrickx 1956, pp. 334-335.
[89] L. Ferrari 1973, p. 268.
[90] *Conf.* V. iii (4)-(6).
[91] This has been discussed in the *tolle, lege* section in the chapter of *Confessiones.*
[92] Firminus' argument was not about twins, but about Their inevitable different lot in life because of their different social status could not be predicted because they had an identical horoscope. Usually, Augustine uses the Biblical Jacob and Esau as an example of twins (for instance, *De civ. Dei* V.4, *Conf.* vii. vi (10)).

of Firminus, who used the example of the simultaneous birth of two boys, one from a noble family, the other from slaves on his father's estate, which made him think of the even more suitable case of twins.[93]

IMPORTANT REFUTATIONS OF ASTROLOGY

| | *deception* | *free will &* | *twins* | *not ars but sors/fors* | *occulto instinctu* | *within providence* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Doct.chr.* II. xxii 33-34 | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| *Conf.* IV. iii (4)-(6) and VII. vi (8)-(10) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| *Gn. litt.* II. xvii (36) | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| *Civ dei* V.1-8 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| *ep.* 246 | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| *Quaest.*45 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| *Simpl.* I. ii (3) | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | |

In all but one of the significant passages concerning the refutation of astrology, Augustine brings up the twin argument to show the intrinsic flaw in the theory.

In four of them, Augustine opposes a counterargument in a way which recalls the modern day chaos theory.[94] He is willing to meet the astrologer's argument which theoretically could explain the different course in the lives of twins: it may be that even the very slight difference in time at the birth of twins can have far reaching consequences for their horoscope and consequently, their destiny in life. Such a claim corresponds with the recent chaos theory that some processes, which seem to behave chaotically, can still fall within a deterministic worldview. The *butterfly-effect* is the modern term for the fact that, for instance, in predicting the weather, sometimes a very slight change in one of the dependent variables can cause a tremendous difference in the result. Augustine answers this counterargument as follows: even if this would be true, and slight changes in the initial position of the stars would have great consequences, your claim that you can scientifically predict the future remains false, since you cannot take into account this slight difference when producing the horoscope (seeing that your measuring instruments are not accurate enough).[95]

> Neque enim ad rem pertinet quod dicunt ipsum momentum minimum atque angustissimum temporis, quod geminorum partum disterminat, multum valere in rerum natura atque caelestium corporum rapidissima velocitate. Etsi enim concedam ut plurimum valeat, tamen in constellationibus a mathematico inveniri non potest, quibus inspectis se fata dicere profitetur. Quod ergo in constellationibus non invenit, quas necesse est unas inspiciat, sive de Jacob, sive de ejus fratre consulatur; quid ei prodest si

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[93] What remains puzzling is that Augustine must have known by then *De divinatione* (he refers to it in *De ordine* (I.vi (15)), which contains the twin argument (II. xliii).

[94] This is explained in section 3 of the chapter on philosophy (*De civitate Dei* V. 3; *De Gen. litt.* II. xvii 36; *Quaestio* 45 and *De doctrina christiana* II. xxii 33-34).

[95] For instance *Quaestio* 45: '*Now, if they should wish to restrict themselves to the constellation of birth, they are prevented from this by the twins themselves, who quite often are born one after the other in such a way that this interval of time is reduced to seconds, which they never do nor can take account in the constellations* (numquam accipiunt **nec possunt** tractare)'.

distat in coelo quod temere securus infamat, et non distat in tabula quam frustra sollicitus intuetur? [96]

*It is not pertinent to say, as they do, that the small interval, the tiny fraction of time that separates the birth of twins is of great significance in view of the nature of the universe and the great speed of the heavenly bodies. Even if conceded that it was of the utmost significance, it would still not be discoverable by the astrologer in the constellations, which when examined are bound to be identical, whether he is consulted about Jacob or about his brother [i.e. Esau], what use is it to him if there is a difference in the heavens, which he thoughtlessly and casually belittles, but no difference in his diagram, which he earnestly and pointlessly beholds?*

### 3.2.3. The Real Power Behind True Predictions

Unlike Vindicianus' response in *Confessiones* to explain the success rate of astrologers ('*non arte sed sorte*'), Augustine mentions *fors* (which is akin to *Fortuna*) as well as *sors* ("power of lots"): '*forte vel sorte non arte*').[97] He thereby seems to give also credit to the sceptical response of Cotta, who in book II of Cicero's *De divinatione* claims that there is no such divine power present in lots, but that it is just mere chance and coincidence ('temeritas et casus').

Quid enim sors est? Idem prope modum quod micare, quod talos iacere, quod tesseras, quibus in rebus temeritas et casus, non ratio nec consilium valet.[98]

*What, now, is a lot? Much the same as the game of mora or playing dice,[99] in which accident and chance prevail, not reason and skill.*

Elsewhere he puts *fors* (and *Fortuna*) in the same category as *casus*:

Quid est enim aliud fors, quid Fortuna, quid casus, quid eventus, nisi cum sic aliquid cecidit, sic evenit, ut vel non cadere atque evenire ut vel aliter cadere atque evenire potuerit?

*For what else do we express with hazard, Fortuna, chance, or accident, except when something happened or occurred in such a way, that it either might not have occurred at all, or might have occurred in another way?*

For Cotta, *sors* is the same as *fors*, since both mean *casus*. However, nobody would regard *sors*, which usually indicated something outside the rational reality or calculable predictions, to be a synonym of *casus*, while it was often considered divinely regulated.[100] It seems that *fors* held an ambiguous middle position between *sors* and *casus*, whereby originally

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[96] *De doctrina christiana* II. xxii 33-34.

[97] *Conf.* IV. iii (6): also in *De diversis quaest. Ad Simplicianum*: 'facile animadvertunt, si volunt, responsa illa quae miseris venditant a nullius artis expositione sed **fortuita** suspicione proferri'. ('*They can easily learn if they will that he replies they sell to poor deluded folk have no basis in any kind of scientific knowledge, but only in chance guess-work*'). The original meaning of *fors* probably stood much closer to a divinely regulated power, than the more scientific notion of "chance", *casus*. The original meaning of *fors* (derived from *ferre*) could tell us something more about the original meaning of *Fortuna* (see section on *Fortuna* in Roman religion, part I).

[98] CICERO, *De divinatione* II. xli (85).

[99] *Tali* were dice with four flat and two round sides, *tesserae*, dice with six flat sides.

[100] B. Bruning, 'De l'astrologie à la grâce', *Augustiniana* 41 (1991), 575-643 (pp. 596-7 n.68): 'par sors, qui généralement traduit le mot grec κληρος ('sort, triage au sort' avec les sens derives de 'partage', héritage', propriété foncière, 'destinée'), on veut le plus souvent indiquer une réalité qui sort de la rationalité ou des prévisions raisonnables et qui est présentée par d'aucuns comme le hasard, mais que d'autres, dans le cadre d'une longue tradition dans l'Antiquité, considèrent comme une ordonnance d'en haut'.

it stood close to *sors*, but later evolved towards *casus*, in the same process which turned the divinity (*Fors*) *Fortuna* into *Fortuna caeca* (*Fortuna-Tyche*).

The two concepts, *fors* ("chance") and *sors* ("divinely regulated") could be regarded as characteristic principles of two pagan philosophies: Epicureans claimed that "pure chance" was the essential principle of their cosmos,[101] while "*sors*" was much more in line with the Stoic idea of the possibility of divination, based on the internal sympathy throughout the cosmos. Augustine feels free to interchange these two concepts, because, as a Christian, he rejects both. "Pure chance" (*casus*), and even "*sors*" does not exist as an independent principle, since only one supreme power governs the whole of creation: God's providence.

When in book VII of *Confessiones* Augustine once more discusses the astrologers' predictions (and by implication also those achieved via sortilege), he gives, what he believes to be the only valid Christian answer:

> Tu enim, domine, iustissime moderator universitatis, consulentibus consultisque nescientibus **occulto instinctu** agis ut, dum quisque consulit, hoc audiat quod eum oportet audire occultis meritis animarum ex abysso iusti iudicii tui. cui non dicat homo: 'quid est hoc?', 'ut quid hoc?' non dicat, non dicat; homo est enim.
>
> *You Lord, most just controller of the universe by your hidden discernment, act on those who consult fortune-tellers and those who are consulted, though they are unaware of it. So when someone consults a futurologist and he hears what he should hear, that is dependent on the hidden merits of souls and the profundity of your just judgement. Let not man say 'What is this? Why is that?' Let him not say it, let him not say it; for he is man.*[102]

Also in *De civitate dei*, (V.7) Augustine refers to '*occultus instinctus*', which again he interprets in a Christian way:[103]

> Hinc omnibus consideratis non immerito creditur, cum astrologi mirabiliter multa vera respondent, **occulto instinctu** fieri spiritum non bonorum, quorum cura est has falsas et noxias opinions de astralibus fatis insere humanis mentibus atque firmare, non horoscopi notati et inspecti aliqua arte quae nulla est.
>
> *When one reflects on all this, one has some justification for supposing that when astrologers give replies that are often surprisingly true, this happens through some mysterious inspiration of evil spirits, whose concern is to instil and confirm in men's minds those false and baneful notions about 'astral destiny'. These true predictions do not come from any skill in the notation and inspection of horoscopes; that is a fake science.*

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[101] See the chapter on Epicureanism in part I.

[102] *Conf.* VII. vi (10). See also R.J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Oddyssey of the Soul* (Cambridge (Mass.): Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 100-101. Augustine must have realized how incredible his view may sound, and how difficult to prove, when he says: '*Let not man say 'What is this? Why is that?' Let him not say it; for he is man*'.

[103] See also *De Genesi ad litt.* II.17: "Ideoque fatendum est quando ab istis vera dicuntur, **instinctu quodam occultissimo** dici quem nescientes humanae mentes patiuntur. Quod cum ad decipiendos homines fit spirituum seductorum operatio est' ('*Hence, we must admit that when astrologers speak the truth, they are speaking by a mysterious instinct that moves a man's mind without his knowing it. When this happens for the purpose of deceiving men, it is the work of evil spirits*').

Augustine adopted and adapted the two (Stoic) elements of true predictions via divination without *ars*, namely *occulto instinctu* and *sors* (*'non arte sed sorte'*) into his Christian belief system. They formed part of an all-embracing and just order of *causae voluntariae* under God's providence, whereby evil spirits were allowed to obtain information about the future, and to pass it on to human beings as a just punishment for people's curiosity and for dabbling in an evil superstition.

This is a good illustration of how Augustine understood a *causa fortuita* (it was *fors(/sors)*, not *ars* which brought success) to be a *causa latentis* or, more precisely, a *causa voluntaria* (in this case, of a demon), which nevertheless fitted into God's just order to work for the good (punishment of curiosity).

He could not always interpret *sors* as *sors mendax*, or coming from evil spirits, since in the most crucial moment of his life Augustine applied sortilege with the Pauline epistles which brought about his conversion. What Augustine thought *sors* stood for in this case, will become clear in the next chapter.

Having established that astrology is a bogus science, Augustine can now make the case (together with the Stoics) that "*fatum*", i.e. the will of the supreme God, is behind the growth of Rome. A similar idea we also find expressed in Virgil's *Aeneid*,[104] but Augustine denies that Jupiter is the supreme god: if he was, why did the Romans feel the need to worship also *Felicitas*, and other gods? Further, a supreme god cannot be worshipped with so much slander, while being involved in so many scandals.[105] To him, the Christian God is the supreme and only god.

## 3.3. Foreknowledge and Free Will Problem

In his *De divinatione* Cicero rejected the idea that God could foreknow everything that was going to happen, because it threatened free will: he insisted that *Fortuna* existed, (meaning fortuitous causes existed), and that these could not be known to God.[106] Augustine's solution was simple: even man's will forms part of the order, and God knowing already what you are going to will, does not prevent that you freely will it.[107] God knows everything in the present, so that, strictly spoken, foreknowledge becomes simply knowledge. Augustine's solution seems attractive. For instance, if I know for certain that my friend will

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[104] VIRGIL, *Aeneid* I. 254-296.
[105] On Augustine's criticism of the Stoic World Soul and Jupiter's identification with it, see *De civ. Dei* IV. 14.
[106] *De civ. Dei* V. 9.
[107] *De civ. Dei* V. 9.

go to the market, he is not under any necessity or compulsion from me to do it.[108] However, the problem is not so much foreknowledge itself, but the structure of the causal order, which not only makes God know everything, but it also gives Him overwhelming control over this order, and thus over the behaviour of his subjects. Particularly the idea of God's grace and His predestination of the saints, which comprises both foreknowledge and active preparation of the gifts whereby they will be saved, threaten to smother free will.[109] Augustine wished to maintain in his belief system both free will (to make man responsible (only!) for his evil deeds), and God's omnipotence. He accused those who believed in astral fate, or in *Fortuna*, of blaming these forces rather than themselves for their sins.[110]

> bonum est enim confiteri tibi, domine, et dicere: 'Misere mei: cura animam meam, quoniam peccavi tibi' ... Quam totam illi salubritatem interficere conantur, cum dicunt: 'De caelo tibi est inevitabilis causa peccandi' et 'Venus hoc fecit aut Saturnus aut Mars.[111]
>
> *It is good to make confession to you, Lord and to say, 'Have mercy on me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against you' ... They [=astrologers] try to destroy this entire saving doctrine when they say: 'The reason for your sinning is determined by heaven' and 'Venus and Saturn or Mars was responsible for this act.*
>
> alii Fortunae malunt inputare, quod pecant: quia omnia fortuitis casibus agitari putant nec tamen hoc se fortuita temeritate, sed perspecta ratione sapere atque asseverare contendunt. Qualis ergo dementia est disputationes suas rationi tribuere et actiones suas casibus subiugare?[112]
>
> *Others rather want to ascribe to Fortuna, what sin they commit: who think that all things are driven to and fro by chance accidents, and yet contend that their wisdom and assertion is not of chance rashness, but of ascertained reason. What madness then is it, to ascribe their discussions to reason, and to make their actions subject to accidents!*

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[108] Augustine's solution for the problem of God's prescience and man's free will has been extensively discussed; for instance, D. Decelles, 'Divine Prescience and Human Freedom in Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977), 151-160; J. Hopkins, 'Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8 (1977), 111-126; W.L. Craig, 'Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will', *Augustinian Studies* 15 (1984), 41-63; Th.J. Kondoleon, 'Augustine and the Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will', *Augustinian Studies*, 18 (1987), 165-178; Ann A. Pang, 'Augustine on Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 40 (1994), 417-431; N. den Bok, 'In vrijheid voorzien: een systematisch-theologische analyse van Augustinus' teksten over voorkennis en wilsvrijheid', *Bijdragen* 56 (1995), 40-60. (This is, for instance, discussed in Carol Harrison, 'Grace and Freedom in Saint Augustine', *Studia Patristica* 27 (Oxford 1991) (Leuven 1993), pp. 298-302.

[109] AUGUSTINE, *De dono perseverantiae* xiv (35): 'Haec est praedestinatio sanctorum, nihil aliud: praescientia scilicet, et preparatio beneficiorum Dei, quibus certissime liberantur, quicumque liberantur'.

[110] Sallust (*BeJu* 1.1) and Cicero (*De rep.* 5.1.) did pretty much the same: they thought it wrong of people to accuse *Fortuna* for man's moral weakness.

[111] *Conf.* IV. iii (4).

[112] AUGUSTINE, *De continentia* v (14).

# 3.4. God's Salvation Plan Revealed

## 3.4.1. Saving the Saints

The almighty God's causal order and providence is different from the Stoic or (Neo-)Platonic order: it contains a particular, active salvation plan. God had installed such a plan, because a number of His (good) angels had fallen away from Him in their pride. He wanted to replace them with some of the human race. This plan is succinctly presented in book XIV: And so it will come about that the fixed number of citizens of *civitas Dei* predestined in His wisdom will be completed out of the condemned human race ('*certum numerum* civium in sua sapientia praedestinatum etiam ex damnato genere humano suae civitatis impleret').[113] To Augustine, all efficient causes are *causae voluntariae*,[114] and almighty God (actively) assists and rewards good wills, abandons and condemns the bad, but controls both good and bad.

> Verumtamen omnipotenti Deo, summo ac summe bono creatori omnium naturarum, voluntatum autem bonarum adiutori et remuneratori, malarum autem relictori et damnatori, utrarumque ordinatori,[115] non defuit utique consilium, quo certum numerum civium in sua sapientia praedestinatum etiam ex damnato genere humano suae civitatis impleret: non eos jam meritis, quandoquidem universa massa tanquam in vitiata radice damnata est, sed gratia discernens; et liberatis non solum de ipsis, verum etiam de non liberatis, quid eis largiatur, ostendens.[116]
>
> *God almighty the supreme and supremely good creator of all beings, who assists and rewards good wills, while he abandons and condemns the bad (and yet He controls both good and bad)* surely did not fail to have a plan *whereby he might complete the fixed number of citizens predestined in his wisdom, even out of the condemned human race. He does not choose them for their merits, seeing that the whole mass of mankind has been condemned as it were in its infected root [which was the universal punishment for Adam's fall]; he selects them by grace and shows the extent of his generosity to those who have been set free not only in his dealings with them, but also in his treatment of those who have not been freed. ... the perverse disorder of transgression did not pervert the right ordering of the universe.*

## 3.4.2. Why God Has Willed the Roman Empire to Expand

Augustine now has to reveal God's (hidden) will behind historical events, or at least give a reason why He allowed them to happen. He was already familiar with this process in *Confessiones*, but now he has to apply it to the historical data of mankind.

### 1. Sallust's Partly Correct Analysis of Roman History

At the outset, Augustine needed reliable historical information. His main source for such material became Sallust, his school author, who even provided him with a moral evaluation.

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[113] *De civ. Dei* XIV. 26.
[114] *De civ. Dei* V. 9: 'non esse causas efficientes omnium quae fiunt, nisi voluntarias'.
[115] See also *De civ. Dei* V. 9: 'In ejus voluntate summa potestas est, quae creatorum spirituum voluntates bonas adjuvat, malas judicat, omnes ordinat'
[116] *De civ. Dei* XIV. 26.

There has been considerable attention paid to the question as to why he relied so heavily on this particular author,[117] and this has yielded many valid answers: in Sallust's work, the gods played only a limited role; Augustine was not interested in the imperial history, because he wanted to focus on the history of Rome before the Christian era; Sallust's pessimism fitted well with Augustine's own purpose; Sallust was an author treasured by his opponents, so that, to great rhetorical effect, he could quote their sources against them.

A. Schindler touched upon an important reason which is especially relevant to this study: the (pagan) Senate considered the period of the emperors a sequel (*Nachspiel*) to the Republican era. For them, good emperors are those who work together with the Senate, while bad emperors demonstrate their own illegitimacy.[118]

Augustine is attacking an ideology at its core, a traditional (not imperial!) ideology, which was still propagated in education. No other historian than Sallust was the exponent of the historical aspect of this ideology,[119] and his pessimism fitted well with the unhappy situation conservative minded senators found themselves in. The Sallust quotations in Augustine's work[120] show that Augustine was above all interested in Sallust's general view on (Roman) history. He partly explained Rome's growth with his analysis: *virtus*, built upon a naked thirst for worldly glory (*cupido gloriae*).[121] Florus and Ammianus Marcellinus agreed it was a co-operation between *virtus* and *Fortuna*.[122]

Augustine translated these opinions into a Christian frame, which posited that there could be no true *virtus* without true piety and true religion,[123] and that only the almighty Christian God had the power to give earthly dominion, not *Fortuna*[124] or the Roman gods.[125]

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[117] H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2 vols. (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1967), I, 225-44 and II, 631-649 (some statistics derived from H. Hagendahl's work concerning Sallust in Augustine's work can be found in *Appendix E*); A. Kurfeß, 'Der Historiker Sallust in Augustins Gottestaat: Eine zeitgemaße Betrachtung', *Theologische Quartalschrift* 117 (1937), 341-356; G.F. Chesnut, 'The Pattern of the Past: Augustine's Debate with Eusebius and Sallust', in *Our Common History as Christians: Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler*, ed. by J. Deschner, L.T. Howe and K. Penzel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 69-95; J.J. O'Donnell, 'Augustine's Classical Readings', *Recherches augustiniennes* 15 (1980), 144-175 (pp. 163-164); P.C. Burns, 'Augustine's Use of Sallust in the *City of God*: The Role of the Grammatical Tradition', *Augustinian Studies* 30:2 (1999), 105-114. He points out that, especially in book 2, Augustine organizes his material around the standard authors of the grammatical curriculum (p. 113); see also A. Schindler, 'Augustine and the Roman Empire', *Studia Patristica* 22 (Oxford 1987) (Leuven, 1989), pp. 326-336.

[118] A. Schindler 1989, pp. 334 and 336.

[119] G.F. Chesnut Jr. 1975, p. 87: 'For Augustine, Rome was the outstanding example of the Earthly City, and Sallust was the one great penetrating analyst of the spirit that had created that proud but fallen commonwealth'; T. Kermit Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), pp. 46-47.

[120] See *Appendix E*.

[121] G.F. Chesnut Jr. 1975, p. 85.

[122] This has been explained in part I, the chapter on history.

[123] *De civ. Dei* V. 19: 'neminem sine vera pietate, id est veri Dei vero cultu, veram potest habere virtutem' ('*no one can have true virtus without true piety, that is without the true worship of the true God*'); *De civ. Dei* XIX. 25. The reason is that *virtus* can only be really *virtus* if it is related to God, not to oneself, because only then it can be without the sin of pride.

The logical conclusion becomes then: God has assisted the Romans, because He wanted to reward them for the lesser vice *cupido gloriae humanae*, which curbed their worse vices,[126] and He did this even though they were worshipping demons.[127] Although Augustine used the Biblical quote 'perceperunt mercedem suam'[128] (*'They have obtained their reward'*) in a cynical way, this cannot hide the fact that, he acknowledged that the Christian God rewarded the worshippers of false gods by giving them what they strove for.[129]

Where Sallust got it wrong according to Augustine was in his representation of early Rome as an ideal society: Augustine points out that this never existed, because Roman ideology was based on wrong principles. He was keen to point out that Sallust contradicted himself in his view on this issue. In his work *Historiae* Sallust places the degeneration of Rome (as early as the period of its foundation) much earlier than in *Bellum Jugurthinum* (146 BC, the destruction of Carthage).[130] Augustine actually will claim that there never was a Roman fall from an original condition of natural justice, simply because there never was true justice. This can only exist when a community is founded upon Christ, and so the only place where true justice reigns is *civitas Dei.*

### 2. Why the Romans were Allowed to Conquer the Jews

An even more striking historical event needed to be accounted for in a Christian order (read: ideology). The Romans, those demon worshippers, managed to conquer Jerusalem and to defeat the Jews, who were God's chosen people. His argument is that the Jews had begun to turn aside to the worship of strange gods and of idols, and sinned by putting Christ to death.[131] Although this is a very logic answer, it could actually strengthen the case his opponents were making against Christianity: they themselves were fearing that Rome was coming to an end, because many had turned away from their old gods, and taken in a strange one.

In book V Augustine points out that the destruction of the Jews fell together with the moment that the New Testament revealed that God should not be worshipped for

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[124] *De civ. Dei* iv. 33: 'ipse [sc. Deus] dat regna terrena et bonis et malis. Neque hoc temere et quasi fortuitu, quia Deus est, non Fortuna' (*'God Himself gives earthly dominion both to good men and to evil, and he does this not at random or, as one may say fortuitously, because He is God, not Fortuna'*).

[125] *De civ. Dei* iv. 28.

[126] Sallust ascribed *cupido glotia* tp the Roman pople as a whole in *Cat.* 7.3.

[127] *De civ. Dei* V. 13. Augustine leaves open whether there is another, more hidden cause, on account of the diverse merits of mankind (*De civ. Dei* V. 19).

[128] *De civ. Dei* V. 15.

[129] G. Bonner, 'Perceperunt mercedem suam: The Background and Theological Implications of *De civitate Dei* V.15', in *Studia Patristica* 18.4 (Oxford 1983) (Leuven, 1985), 3-7. G. Bonner points out that Augustine suitably chose the word 'perceperunt' in this context, which is found in one alternative manuscript of the old Latin Bible, because it is a stronger word than 'receperunt', found in the *Vulgate* (p. 6 n. 17).

[130] I am following here closely the wording of P.C. Burns (1999, p. 113).

[131] *De civ. Dei* V. 34.

temporal blessings, but for the sake of eternal life. For the greater glory of God, those who sought earthly glory and attained it by their *virtus* [i.e. the Romans], overcame them who in their perverse wickedness spurned and put to death the giver of true glory and of citizenship in the Eternal City [i.e. the Jews].[132]

### 3.4.3. Why the Good Suffer and the Bad Prosper

One of the main reasons why God wishes to distribute temporal goods seemingly randomly, was that he wanted to assist his predestinated saints in *learning* to despise the temporal goods, and to seek for the eternal and invisible: the *causae fortuitae* become *causae voluntariae*, acquiring a rationale, so that they can be fitted into God's just order. In situations where God's justice is not apparent - good men meeting adversity, and bad men living in prosperity - there is thus salutary instruction coming from God. Augustine admits that almost all of the just judgements of God are hidden from mortal perception, but one thing is not: that what is hidden must be just, and this will become clear on the *Day of the Lord.*[133] Even this concealment has a purpose: it serves to exercise humility and to undermine pride.[134] The Epicureans rejected the existence of a divine providence, because of the many injustices they saw around them.[135] In presenting a just rationale behind the seemingly irrational distribution of worldly goods in the world, Augustine can defend himself against their criticism.

He feels capable to give some specific reasons about the apparent inconsistencies concerning the lives of the emperors: the Christian Constantine was favoured throughout his life by temporal blessings, because '*God did not wish that those who believed He was to be worshipped for the sake of life eternal, should suppose that for the temporal blessings he needed to make his supplications to demons*'.[136] Further, God removed the Christian emperor Jovian more quickly than Julian, the Apostate, so that no emperor should become a Christian in order to earn the good fortune of Constantine, since one should be a Christian only with a view to life eternal.

These examples are an illustration of Augustine's general view that the seemingly random distribution of worldly goods, is meant to instruct God's people.[137] They need to

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[132] *De civ. Dei* v. 18.
[133] *De civ. Dei* XX. 2.
[134] *De civ. Dei* XI. 22.
[135] LACTANTIUS, *Divina Institutiones* III. 16.
[136] See also *De civ. Dei* X.14.
[137] That even members of his congregation had objections against the ways of God's providence is shown in Augustine, *Sermones* 311.12, wherein he explains that God giving good things even to bad people is done for their (*sc.* the congregation's) education, and not out of God's perversity.

learn that He controls all temporal goods, while they should not become attached to this temporal life, but seek life eternal.[138]

There must be also a just and rational explanation for God allowing devout nuns to be raped during the sack of Rome, while detractors of Christianity could come away unscathed by sheltering in a Church,[139] and now even mock the horrible fate of those nuns.[140] He accepts that God has his reasons for not always punishing every wrongdoing (otherwise people would think there was nothing reserved for the last judgement),[141] while not always granting what Christians petition in their prayers (otherwise they might think that God was to be served merely for the sake of those rewards). God will only grant those things for which a Christian prays, which He beliefs are for his good.[142]

Concerning the violent death of the Christian emperor Gratian, Augustine seems to abandon his principle of divine instruction, and he follows here a line of reasoning, which simply does not stand up to scrutiny: in any case Gratian was slain in less painful circumstances than the great Pompey, who was a worshipper of demons. Furthermore, Pompey could not be avenged by Cato, while Gratian was avenged by the Christian Theodosius. Augustine realizes that this last inference was not very appropriate, because vengeance should not be a consolation for a Christian.[143]

### 3.4.4. Salvation History

Writing the history of *civitas Dei*, the society of predestinated saints who will in the end enjoy the vision of God together with the angels, turns history into salvation history: every single event is incorporated into God's providential order, which executes His plan to lead the saints towards their salvation. Unlike Roman history, this history 'does not stand or fall

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[138] *De civ. Dei* I. 10.

[139] Augustine tells us that they attributed their deliverance to their own destiny (fatum suum), instead of to God's providence (*De civ. Dei* I.1).

[140] *De civ. Dei.* I. 28-29; this, of course, recalls the futility of worshipping *Fortuna Barbata.* Pagans, too, could argue that worshipping the Christian God reveals the same inconsistencies.

[141] *De civ. Dei* I. 14.

[142] For instance AUGUSTINE, *Epistulae* cxxx (130) (to Proba, AD 411): '*If anything happens contrary to our prayer, by bearing it patiently and giving thanks in all things, we must not doubt that it was rather God's Will than ours which had to be done*'. T. Maschke comes to the conclusion that the effectiveness of prayer is the result of conforming one's will to God's gracious order of salvation in Christ. The one who prays obtains what he wills if he wills the same what God wills for him. In this way, any prayer not granted has been accounted for: God had not willed it to happen (T. Maschke, 'St. Augustine's Theology of Prayer: Gracious Conformation', in J.C. Schaubelt & F. Van Fleteren (eds.), *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum* (Collectanea Augustiniana 1) (New York: Lang, 1990), pp. 431-446). See also AUGUSTINE, *Sermones* 80, wherein Augustine urges his congregation to pray adamantly for eternal benefits, and moderately for temporal benefits, knowing that, when you do not receive them, God judged it was not suitable for us.

[143] *De civ. Dei* V. 26.

with the fate of Rome or, indeed, with the fate of any particular earthly society'.[144] It meant that he rejected the sacral conception of the Roman Empire as expounded by Eusebius.[145] This different view on history reveals itself also in the differing views on the nature of God's providence. Providence is no longer perceived as 'an empirically observable, objective pattern in the *external* course of events', its true significance takes place 'in the *inner* history of each human subject involved in the course of events': everything is (pre-)arranged in such a way that the elect will receive their everlasting rewards in the Heavenly city.[146] In translating history into an inner history, external events are much easier incorporated into God's order: what matters is not what happens (i.e. the external historical data), but how each individual will react to what happens.[147] *Confessiones* tells us the inner history of one such man towards salvation (but not yet until his ultimate destination, so that Augustine is still unsure whether he belongs to *De civitate Dei*).

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[144] R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 53.
[145] R.A. Markus 1970, pp. 55-56; G. F. Chesnut Jr. 1975, p. 79.
[146] G. F. Chesnut Jr. 1975, pp. 80-81.
[147] *De civ. Dei* I. 8.

# CHAPTER V

# THE EMERGENCE OF THE "GHOST OF *FORTUNA*"

Throughout his life, Augustine tried to gain deeper insight into God, using his own life experience, studying the Bible, and relying on his knowledge of (Neo-)Platonic philosophy, while firmly holding on to the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church. The notion of the will became crucial to Augustine's thinking, as he came to realize that the cause of an evil or good action was an evil or a good will.[148] That is why he was so keen to consider all efficient causes, even the fortuitous ones, to be voluntary causes in God's providential order. In his attempt to explain within Christian orthodoxy a change of will, both from good to evil, and from evil to good, he arrived at some highly controversial views: the doctrine of original sin and the Falls (angelic and Adam's) on the one hand, and of freely given grace and predestination on the other hand. The first part of this section discusses the problems arising from a change of will from evil to good, the next section will focus on the change from good to evil.

## 1. THE MYSTERIOUS TURN FROM AN EVIL TO A GOOD WILL: GOD'S GRACE

### 1.1. Not All Will Be Saved by God's Freely Given Grace

No doubt, Augustine's utter powerlessness to make his will want to embrace Christianity in the garden of Milan, and the need for (divine) assistance to do so, made it for Augustine relatively easy to come to the gloomy conclusion that, on his own, fallen man was utterly incapable to change his evil will into a good will:[149] God's grace became imperative to bring

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[148] AUGUSTINE, *De gratia Christi* XVIII (19)- xx (21): '*The causes of good and evil actions are twofold good and evil wills*'. For a good discussion of Augustine's emphasis on the will, see E.O. Springsted, 'Will and Order: The Moral Self in Augustine's *De libero arbitrio*', *Augustinian Studies* 29:2 (1998), 77-96.

[149] G. O'Daly, 'Predestination and Freedom in Augustine's Ethics', in *Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Studies in Plotinus and Augustine*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2001), (repr. of *The Philosophy in Christianity*, ed. by G. Vesey (Cambridge: n.p.; 1989), pp. 85-97: 'Fallen humanity cannot achieve goodness on its own' (p. 91).

about this change.[150] In his mature thought he also came to believe that even the beginning of faith should be considered to be a gift of God,[151] because He prepared man's will to choose the good: *voluntas praeparatur a Deo* (Proverbs 8.35).[152] Augustine also came to regard perseverance - needed to maintain one's good will until the end of one's life - as a separate gift of God.[153] According to him, grace was given absolutely gratuitously, without regard for personal merit: 'gratia Dei gratis datur', and not according to acceptance of persons (i.e. favouring someone, because detecting something which was worthy of honour or pity).[154]

Not everybody, however, dies a baptized believer,[155] although God was almighty and could therefore turn the wills of any man in the direction He pleases.[156] This made Augustine realize that God only *wanted* a limited number of people to be saved, namely to complete the number of angels again, after some had fallen away,[157] and that it was completely in His hands who would join the Heavenly City. The Pauline verse *'It is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy* (Rom 9: 16) combined with *'God has mercy on whom He wills, and withholds mercy from whom He wills'* (Rom 9: 18) further supported this view. Clearly, God did not want all to be saved.

This led, however, to a problem, because there was also a Bible text, which seemed to say exactly the opposite (1 Tim 2: 4): *'God wills all men to be saved'*. Since Augustine did not want to sacrifice God's omnipotence – God cannot will anything in vain - he had to find a way to fit also this passage within his theological premises: his solutions were creative, but not really convincing, for instance, 'all' referred in this verse to 'all those predestined' (*De correp. et grat.* I. 14 (44)), or 'men of every kind' (*De correp. et grat.* I. 14. (44); *Enchirideon* I. 103).[158]

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[150] AUGUSTINE, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* xx (41): *'The human will is not removed but is changed from an evil into a good will by grace'*.

[151] AUGUSTINE, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* xiv (28); W.S. Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans IX (AD 394-396), 55-74 (p. 66); W.S. Babcock, Augustine and Paul: the Case of Romans IX', in *Studia Patristica* 16.2 (Oxford 1975) (Leuven, 1985), pp. 473-479; it was in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* (3.7; *Retractationes* I. 1.23 2-4) that Augustine admits he was wrong in thinking earlier that faith was not preceded by grace (J.M. Rist, 'Augustine on Free will and Predestination', *Journal of Theological Studies NS* 20 (1969), 420-447, (p. 439)).

[152] Augustine used this quote for example in *On Grace and Free Will* xvii (32): *'It is certain that it is we that will when we will, but it is He who makes us will what is good, of whom it is said (as he has just now expressed it), 'The will is prepared by the Lord'*. T. Sage gives about fifty references to this quotation in his article 'Praeparatur voluntas a Deo', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 10 (1964), pp. 19-20; See J. M. Rist 1969, p. 425 n. 1.

[153] He defended this in his work *De dono perseverantiae.*

[154] AUGUSTINE, *Contra epistulas Peligianorum* II. vii (14).

[155] 'Nothing in the Catholic faith is more certain than the fact that not all men are to be saved' (G. Bonner 1986, p. 379).

[156] AUGUSTINE, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* xx (41) and xxi (43).

[157] AUGUSTINE, *Enchirideon* ix (29).

[158] See for a list of explanations, N. Strand 'Augustine on Predestination and Divine Simplicity', in *Studia Patristica* 38 (Oxford 1999) (Leuven, 2001), pp. 290-305 (p. 301 n. 80); G. Bonner 1986, p. 389.

God's freely given gifts of grace (the beginning of faith and perseverance to the end) combined with His prescience, rendered, according to Augustine, a theory of predestination.[159] God foreknew who was going to be saved before that person was born.

> The salvation of the elect is orchestrated by the Augustinian God inflexibly from eternity, not only by direct action in the grace given *through* His Son, *in* the Holy Spirit, but also by the providential arrangement of created agency and temporal events.[160]

What had changed from his earlier thought on grace was that not only did God providentially organize the environment to assist those He wished to convert, He was also actively assisting them through the *interior* operation of the Holy Spirit.[161] This interference in man's own will raises serious questions about free will. N. Strand rightly states that 'free will plays only a secondary role in the fearsome spectacle orchestrated by the Augustinian God'.[162] Perhaps there is indeed a way of maintaining a notion of freedom within this "spectacle",[163] but this issue will not be further discussed.

What becomes problematic is why God predestines only a limited number of "saints" to whom alone He gives the necessary efficient grace (not merely sufficient grace), which enables them to will and to do what God requires.[164] The other problem, more relevant to this present study is to investigate on which rationale His election of saints is based, if it is not by merit or acceptance of persons.

J. Burnaby (1991), G. Bonner (1986), J.M. Rist (1994) and N. Strand (2001) (to name but a few) have all raised objections against God limiting his mercy. J.M. Rist, for instance, sees a problem with Christ's immense sacrifice, which is apparently still not enough for everyone to be saved.[165] He further thinks problematic Augustine's attempt to dispose of the difficulty of God's justice 'by driving a wedge between human and divine equity'. If there is such a distinction in standards, God becomes completely unknowable.[166] J. Burnaby, too, sees a problem with the comprehensibility of God's justice: 'human and divine justice are incommensurable'.[167] He also points out that showing mercy, which in this

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[159] AUGUSTINE, *De dono perse* I. xxi (54).
[160] N. Strand 2001, p. 298.
[161] J.P. Burns, 'A Change in Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace in 418', in *Studia Patristica* 16 (Oxford 1975) (Leuven, 1985), pp. 491-496.
[162] N. Strand 2001, p. 299.
[163] Carol Harrison, 'Delectatio Victrix: Grace and Freedom in Saint Augustine', *Studia Patristica* 27 (Oxford 1991) (Leuven, 1993), pp. 298-302 is a valuable attempt to do so; see also her 'Augustine on Free Will and Predestination', *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 20 (1969), 420-447.
[164] E. Osborn, *Ethical Patterns in Early Christian Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 167. he lists the several kinds of grace necessary to be saved: prevenient grace (to initiate good thoughts and aspirations), co-operating grace, sufficient grace (this is what Adam possessed before he fell), and efficient grace.
[165] J.M. Rist 1994, p. 275.
[166] J.M. Rist 1994, pp. 275-276.
[167] J. Burnaby 1991, pp. 197-199.

case implies returning good for evil, is precisely what justice *qua* justice is not.[168] N. Strand convincingly argues that God's discriminative action towards mankind, by showing mercy only to a limited number, and not to all (or none), is incompatible with the idea of divine simplicity.[169] Furthermore, because of our "blindness" (which certainly cannot be seen as something positive), we - unlike God - cannot know who belongs in this life to the saved and who not, so that we are therefore "condemned/punished" to be '*so stirred by the spirit of charity as to will that all men be saved*'.[170] Unlike God, our mercy is expected to extent to the whole of mankind.

## 1.2. Vestiges of Astrology in Augustine's View on Grace

### 1.2.1. *Sors*: The Link Between Astrology and Grace

Augustine's opponents accused him of maintaining astral fate under the name of grace.[171] The control of God over man's will recalls the astrologer's belief that '*not only actions and events, but also our very wills themselves depend on the position of the stars at the time in which one is conceived or born*'.[172] K.E. Lee accurately describes the effect of God's grace upon man's freedom as 'the elimination of human will as an independent factor in the causal chain of personal salvation'.[173]

In his learned and exhaustive article,[174] B. Bruning discusses Augustine's journey from astrology to his doctrine of grace, via his changing conception of the idea of *sors*. *Sors* had been Vindicianus' explanation of the success of astrology. He easily moved from *sors* legible in the firmament, to *sors* legible in a consulted book, because both were comparable forms of divination.[175] *Ars* was, as it were, a scientifically calculable way of divination, while *sors* was incalculable, but therefore not necessarily irrational. In his later thought Augustine will identify *sors* sometimes with *gratia Dei*,[176] for instance, in the psalm verse 'in manibus tuis sortes meae'.[177]

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168 J. Burnaby 1991, pp. 196.
169 N. Strand 2001, pp. 300-305.
170 AUGUSTINE, *De correptione et gratia* 15; likewise does the Church pray for all her enemies, because it does not know who are predestined to salvation (only the prayers will be granted of those whom God elected) (*De civ. Dei* XXI. 24)).
171 *Under the name of grace, they so assert fate as to say that unless God inspired unwilling and resisting man with the desire of good, and that good imperfect, he would neither be able to decline from evil nor to lay hold of good.*
172 *De civ. Dei* V.1.
173 K.E. Lee, 'Augustine, Manicheism, and the Good', *Patristic Studies* 2 (New York: Lang, 1999), p. 83.
174 B. Bruning, 'De l'astrologie à la grâce', *Augustiniana* 41 (1991), 575-643.
175 B. Bruning 1991, p. 597 n. 69.
176 For instance, *Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 118. 4: 'in sorte autem quid, nisi Dei gratia commendata est?'
177 *Ennarationes in Psalmos* XXX, ii, s.ii 13.

> In manibus tuis sortes meae. Non in manibus hominum, sed in manibus tuis. Quae sunt istae sortes? Quare sortes? Audito nomine sortium, non debimus sortilegos quaerere. Sors enim non aliquid mali est; sed res est in dubitatione humana divinam indicans voluntatem. [...][178]Quid igitur est: In manibus uis sortes meae? Sortes dixit, quantum ego existimo, gratiam qua salvi facti sumus. Quare sortis nomine appellat gratiam Dei? Quia in sorte non est electio, sed voluntas Dei. Nam ubi dicitur: Iste facit, iste non facit, merita considerantur; et ubi merita considerantur, electio est, non sors; quando autem Deus nulla merita nostra invenit, sorte voluntatis suae nos salus fecit, quae voluit, non quia digni fuimus. Haec est sors. [...] Haec quodam modo sors occulta est voluntas dei; in humano genere sors est, sors veniens de Dei occulta voluntate, apud quem non est iniquita. Non enim ille personas accipit, sed occulto illius iustitia tibi sors est. [179]
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> *My lots are in thy hands. Not in men's hands, but in thy hands. What are these lots? Why lots? When we hear of lots, we are not to look for sortilege. A lot is not something evil, but is something showing the will of God when man is uncertain [...] What is the meaning, then, of 'My lots are in thy hands?' So far as I can judge, he termed "lots" the grace by which we are saved. Why does he call the grace of God by the name of 'lot'? Because in a lot there is not choice but the will of God. But when God found no deserts on our part, He saved us by the lot of His will, because it was His will, not because we were worthy of it. That is the meaning of 'lot'. [....] This lot [i.e. the casting of the lot by the Roman soldiers to decide who will get the seamless undergarment of Jesus], so to speak, is the hidden will of God; the lot is cast upon the human race, a lot proceeding from the hidden will of God, with whom is no injustice: For he is not an acceptor of persons, but His hidden justice is your lot.*

To Augustine *sors* was '*gratia Dei qua salvi facti sumus*', because in a lot there was not choice but the will of God ('quia in sorte non est electio, sed voluntas Dei'). According to B. Bruning the rationality of this *sors* is the expression of the divine will, hidden in God, and as unmerited grace, unintelligible and incalculable.[180]

In refuting his opponents' claim that he has reintroduced astral fate with his concept of freely given grace, Augustine first goes over to a counterattack. Because they accept the necessity of the baptism of infants, whereby also no merits precede receiving it, they find themselves in a similar situation: if they themselves claim that they are not introducing (astral) fate, by asserting that baptism is given without any preceding merit, then they should also allow Augustine to state the same for grace. He then defends his own position, explaining the difference between his view on grace and astral fate:

> Deinde fati assertores et bona et mala hominum fato tribuunt; Deus autem in malis hominum merita eorum debita retributione persequitur, bona vero per indebitam gratiam misericordi voluntate largitur, utrumque faciens non per stellarum temporale consortium, sed per suae severitatis et bonitatis aeternum altumque consilium.
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> *In a word, the assertors of (astral) fate attribute both men's good and evil doings and fortunes to fate; God in the ill fortunes of men follows up their merits with due retribution, while good fortunes He bestows by undeserved grace with a merciful will; doing both the one and the other not according to a temporal conjunction of stars, but according to the eternal and high counsel of His severity and goodness.*

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[178] He recalls the example of the apostles casting lots to appoint someone to replace Judas.

[179] *Ennarationes in Psalmos* XXX, ii, s.ii 13.

[180] B. Bruning 1991, p. 639. There is also an intelligible part of *sors*, which is the deserved lot of mankind after original sin.

Nevertheless, the fact that God exerts control over our wills, and has decided our lot, makes man's life still akin to living under astral fate, an important difference being that there is no way of finding out now whether one belongs to the predestined saints, whereas astrology promised to reveal one's 'lot' in life. Augustine was being accused of remaining a Manichee, because in this heresy, too, people were left out of control of their own destiny, because when evil is 'external and therefore uncontrollable', people begin to feel 'powerless to influence their fate or luck'. Astrology could help to obtain some knowledge (and therefore control) over evil.[181]

### 1.2.2. The Twin Argument Revisited

One of the texts which made Augustine come to his doctrine of freely given grace was God's election of Jacob (and rejection of Esau), even before they were born: 'Jacob dilexi, Esau autem odio habui' (Romans 9: 13; '*Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*'). He was familiar with the different destinies of twins when refuting astrology, whereby he frequently used the example of Jacob and Esau. Now, he actually wishes to explain the completely different destinies in their lives. The distinction made between the two seemed not to have come from them, but solely from God, who had mercy on Jacob, but not on the other, and this without regard for merit.[182]

To defend his doctrine Augustine used an even clearer example - fictive, but perfectly plausible -, which he knew his opponents had to account for within almighty God's just providential order:

> constituamus aliquos ab aliqua meretrice geminos editos atque, ut ab aliis colligerentur, expositos; horum sine baptismo expiravit unus, alius baptizatus.[183]
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> *Let us suppose certain twins, born of a certain harlot, and exposed that they might be taken up by others. One of them died without baptism, the other is baptised.*

This example shows how creative Augustine was in finding examples which presented the issue in its starkest essence: how to account for the salvation of the one baby, and the eternal perdition of the other, when nothing in their nature seems to allow for this enormously different lot in life: eternal suffering and eternal bliss.

Firstly, the horrible suffering of the baby - though it had not yet committed any sin – Augustine could justify with his doctrine of original sin, even though this was partly based

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[181] S.N.C. Lieu, *Manicheism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 141; K.E. Lee (1999, p. 87) sees a threefold influence of the Manichean notion of the Good in Augustine's doctrine of predestination: 'the context of Supreme Good, the framework in cosmic order, and the deterministic factor exercised by *consuetudo* and *concupiscentia.*

[182] W.S. Babcock, 1985, p. 478.

[183] AUGUSTINE, *Contra duas epistulas Peligianorum* II. 14.

on a mistranslation of the Greek text of Romans (5: 12).[184] Augustine went beyond Ambrosiaster's statement '*we all have sinned in Adam as in a lump* ('quasi in massa')*; for since he was corrupted by sin, all whom he begot have been born under sin*',[185] when he regarded original sin to be original guilt.[186] It becomes essential to Augustine's belief system that every man carried Adam's guilt within him, the moment he was born, so that without grace there would have been one '*massa peccati, luti, perditionis*, justly deserving damnation'.[187] For God there are no 'innocent' children, otherwise there would have been innocent victims in his *just* order.

To solve the other issue, why the other baby enjoys eternal bliss, Augustine can now point out that there is no prevenient merit by which the baby could have deserved such a huge reward. What could explain their totally different lot is God's freely given grace, ('gratia Dei gratis datur'[188]). God's mercy is utterly gratuitous, but it does not extend to the whole of mankind.

> Quod hic fatum Fortunamve fuisse dicamus, quae omnino nulla sunt? [...] Si ergo nec fatum, quia nullae stellae ista decernunt; *nec Fortuna, quia non fortuiti casus haec agunt*; nec personarum, nec meritorum diversitas hoc fecerunt: quid restat, quantum ad baptizatum adtinet, nisi gratia Dei quae vasis factis in honorem gratis datur; quantum autem ad non baptizatum, ira Dei, quae vasis factis in contumeliam pro ipsius massae meritis redditur?[189]
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> *What can we say was in this case fate or Fortuna, which are here absolutely nothing? [...] If, then, neither fate, since no stars made them to differ;* nor Fortuna, since no fortuitous accidents produce these things*; nor the diversity of persons nor of merits have done this; what remains, so far as it refers to the baptized child, save the grace of God, which is freely given to vessels made unto honour; but, as it refers to the unbaptized child, the wrath of God, which is repaid to the vessels made for dishonour in respect of the deservings of the lump itself?*

## 1.3. The (ir)Rationale Behind *sancti selecti*

### 1.3.1. Arbitrariness of Hidden Justice

Because grace does not extend to everybody, mankind is radically divided into two groups, which ultimately will form the citizens of *civitas terrena* and those of *civitas Dei*. The crucial question becomes: if not by merit or acceptance of persons, why did God choose Jacob and

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[184] 'In quo omnes peccaverunt': *'in whom [sc. Adam] all men sinned*; while the actual meaning is rather 'because all men sinned' G. Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* rev. edn (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1986), p. 374.

[185] AMBROSIASTER, *Commentarius in Epist. Ad Rom.*, v. 12, quoted by Augustine in *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* IV. 7 (G. Bonner 1986, p. 373).

[186] H. Davies, *The Vigilant God: Providence in the Thought of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Barth* (New York: Lang, 1992), p. 35, following G. Bonner 1986, pp. 373-374.

[187] G. Bonner 1986, p. 378; see also J.M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; repr. as paperback 1996), pp. 273-274 on using babies to demonstrate original sin. The universal punishment of mankind is also explained in *De civ. De* XIII. 13.

[188] AUGUSTINE, *Contra epistulas Peligianorum* II. vii (14).

[189] AUGUSTINE, *Contra epistulas Peligianorum* II. vii (14).

not Esau, and why did God save the one baby and not the other? Within the example of the babies, Augustine could also exclude God's foreknowledge of eventual future merits in his decision to give grace to the one baby, but withholding it from the other: since they die as infants, there are no future good works to take into account.[190]

He rejects astral fate, but the possibility of *Fortuna*, as goddess of chance, he only rejects by stating 'non fortuiti casus haec agunt'. Nevertheless, *Fortuna* has also something to recommend itself. Several times in *De civitate Dei*, *Fortuna* is said to bestow her goods/ favours without any regard for merit:

> Fortuna uero, quae dicitur bona, sine ullo examine meritorum fortuito accidit hominibus et bonis et malis, unde etiam Fortuna nominatur.[191]
>
> *Fortuna - what we call good fortune – happens to men, good and bad alike, without any weighing of their merits; it comes fortuitously; hence the name Fortuna.*

Augustine has to come up with a reason for God wanting to save one baby and not the other, otherwise God seems to behaving like *Fortuna (Bona) Gratia*, who does not take into consideration merit, but freely distributes her (spiritual) goods randomly.

The circumstances are, of course, different: for the Augustinian God there are no merits to take into consideration, (there is only one *massa peccati*). There are consequently only bad people with an evil will. Exactly the gratuitous gift of grace will make some good by turning their evil will into a good will. Nevertheless, as commentators did not fail to notice, God's free distribution of grace seems to amount to an 'arbitrary use of power':[192]

> God's gratuitous mercy to the elect can just as easily be interpreted as Divine capriciousness and the rankest favouritism, since it is God who gives the grace of salvation, irrespective of merit, to some but not to others.[193]

In *Epistula* CXCIV.3 Augustine insists that undeserved grace is given to people not in accordance with the prerogative of merit, the necessity of fate, or the randomness of *Fortuna,* but according to the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, even though this remains hidden from us.[194] He thinks man ought to accept that God wills the one and not the other to be saved, and that is simply man's lot. Any further questioning is useless, because these things happen through the hidden providence of God, and His judgements are unsearchable and His ways past finding out.[195]

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[190] AUGUSTINE, *Contra epistulas Peligianorum* II. vii (16).
[191] *De civ. Dei* IV. 18.
[192] R.M. Rist 1994, p. 273.
[193] H. Davies 1992, p. 45; also W.S. Babcock 1985.
[194] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* 194.3: 'honoram donat indebitum gratia, non meriti praerogativa, non fati necessitate, non temeritate Fortunae, sed altitudine divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei, quam non aperit, sed clausam miratur apostolus clamans: 'o altitudo divinarum...'.
[195] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* xxii (44); see also *Contra duas epistulas pelagianarum* IV. vi (16); quoting Romans 9: 20 and Romans 9: 33.

God setting apart a group from the *massa peccati* without taking into account merit, while finding no rational principle behind the selection made strongly reminds of his ridiculing the *di selecti* of the Roman pantheon.[196] There the choice was also not based on merit or renown, and since there was no rational principle behind the distribution, Augustine concluded that *Fortuna* made the selection. Now, Augustine himself is confronted with a "selection of saints" without having any clue about the rationale behind the selection. This time, he cannot accept that the selection therefore was in the hands of *Fortuna.*

### 1.3.2. How to Exclude Personal Favouritism

If we were set with a task comparable to God's election of saints from the *massa peccati*, how could we do this fairly, without showing any favouritism? For example, if we want to give three people from a group of fifteen each one hundred pounds, how can we do that, when merit cannot be taken into account, and without showing any favouritism whatsoever to any of them? The (only?) answer is, I believe, by applying sortilege: you write the names of the candidates on pieces of paper, and pick three out, just as the apostles did to elect someone to replace Judas.[197] It is the best way to eliminate one's own personal preferences (or will), so that others cannot blame you of favouritism.

*Fortuna*'s notorious blindness can in this way actually help to guarantee that justice is being done. That is why also *Iustitia* sometimes is depicted blindfolded: not as a symbol of capriciousness, but as an assurance of her impartiality. The problem with God is that he cannot be impartial in this sense. He cannot apply sortilege, or throw a die to let "chance" or "lot" decide instead of his will, because He already will know the outcome: He cannot escape His own will, so that He carries full responsibility for His choice. It seems that, in this case, it becomes impossible for God to remain impartial in His choice, and not to show favouritism; He cannot blindfold himself, nor act randomly, while randomness seems required to choose impartially. The only way in which God can preserve His justice seems to be that He wants everybody to be saved, or none.

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[196] *De civ. dei* VII. 3. This has been discussed in the chapter on *De civitate Dei*, section 1.2.3.
[197] Acts 1: 26 (The lot fell to Matthias).

# 2. FROM A GOOD TO AN EVIL WILL: THE FALL

## 2.1. The Problem of Evil

### 2.1.1. The Importance of the Philosophical Problem for Augustine

No other question seems to have challenged Augustine's intellectual capacities more than "Unde malum?"("*Whence did evil arise?*").[198] It was this problem that drove him in his youth into the arms of the Manichees.[199] One of the main reasons for his allegiance to Manicheism was that it provided him with a plausible explanation for what he experienced within him: a force which kept him tied to doing evil, something he later came to understand as the fetters of *consuetudo* (something in between custom and habit) and *concupiscentia.*[200] The Manichean solution for the existence of evil did not raise the issue of theodicy.[201] They held that there was another nature or substance besides "God": next to a peaceful realm of Light, there existed a realm of turbulent Darkness, which attacked the Light in an eternal cosmic conflict.[202] By acknowledging such a metaphysical (and material) dualism, "God" could never be seen as the author or the cause of evil.[203]

In abandoning Manicheism, having acquired a new understanding of God and evil through the influence of the books of the (Neo-)Platonists and Ambrose's sermons, the question "Unde malum?" received a new explanation. In *De ordine*, Augustine tried to square God's omnipotence, justice and goodness with the evil we experience around us. *De libero arbitrio* tackled the question where evil came from.

In this work he wanted to refute Manicheism, and defend the Christian solution of evil. He therefore laid great emphasis on man's free will, in which he located the cause of sin, so that man was fully responsible, and should not try to put the blame outside himself (be it fate, *Fortuna*, an evil soul within him, separate from his good soul, or the stars).

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198 J.M RIST, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 261; G.F. Gässler, *De Ordo-Gedanke unter besonderen Berücksichtigung von Augustinus und Thomas von Aquino* (Academias Hochschul Schriften Philosophie 5) (Sankt Augustin: Academia-Verlag, 1994), p. 53; J.P. Burns, 'Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16.1 (1988), 9-27 (p. 25): 'The problem of the nature and origin of evil was one of the driving forces in Augustine's intellectual life'.

199 AUGUSTINE, *De libero arbitrio* I. ii (4).

200 W.S. Babcock, 'Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16.1 (1988), 28-55 (p. 39), quoting AUGUSTINE, *De duabus animis* xiii (19); for the explanation of *consuetudo* see, for instance, J. Wetzel, 'The Recovery of Free Agency in the Theology of St. Augustine' in *Harvard Theological Review* 80.1 (1987), p. 115, and J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, pp. 32-33.

201 J. Brachtendorf, 'The Goodness of Creation and the Reality of Evil: Suffering as a Problem in Augustine's theodicy" in *Augustinian Studies* 31.1 (2000), p.80.

202 J.P. Burns 1988, p. 9. See also *Conf.*, III. vii (12) & VII. ii (3).

203 S.N.C. Lieu (1985, p. 150) thinks that the 'Manichean solution to the problem of evil was a successful by-product of Mani's teaching'.

Rereading the Pauline *Epistles* made him realize how greatly impaired man's free will actually was, and how irresistible God's given grace. Afterwards he himself admitted when he reviewed his *De Quaestionibus Ad Simplicianum*:

> In cuius quaestionis solutione laboratum est quidem pro libero arbitrio voluntatis humanae; sed vicit Dei gratia.
>
> *In answering this question [sc. concerning Romans IX: 10-29] I have tried hard to maintain the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God prevailed.*[204]

Augustine came to accept that God "intervened" within man's (free?) will itself, by preparing it to choose the good: *voluntas praeparatur a Deo* (Proverbs 8: 35).[205] God did not only foreknow events (which Cicero thought sufficient to undermine any notion of free will), He even predestined certain events, by actively bringing them about.[206] The issue of whether man was responsible for willing to do evil needed to be looked upon afresh.

Julian of Eclanum, the great expounder and defender of the Pelagian doctrine, accused Augustine of presenting evil as a Manichean force, this time under the (thin) disguise of God's wrath.[207] So it happens that even in his unfinished last work, *Contra secundam Juliani responsionem opus imperfectum*, Augustine was forced to expound his controversial position on the question which had puzzled him for such a long time: "*Unde malum?*"[208]

Augustine somehow had to keep man responsible for his sins by locating them in his free will (in response to Manicheism), on the other hand, in maintaining that grace came "gratis", he needed to ascertain that without God's help fallen man could do no good: he could not even have a good will (against Pelagianism). Somehow, he needed to find an alternative way between Manicheism and Pelagianism.

In his *Sermones* Augustine at times deplores the attitude of people who accuse *Fortuna*, fate or the Devil for their sinning, while they should blame only themselves for it, for instance:

> Si peccata tua aliis volueris tribuere, ut dixi, vel Fortunae vel fato vel diabolo, non tibi, et iterum bona facta tua tibi volueris tribuere non deo, perversus es.... quaeritur ab eo: 'quid est Fortuna, quid est fatum?' et incipere dicere, quia stella eum coegerunt ad peccatum. Videte quomodo paulatim blasphemia eius currit ad deum [...] quid enim

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[204] AUGUSTINE, *Retractationes* II. 1.1.

[205] Augustine used this quote for example in *On Grace and Free Will* xvii (32): '*It is certain that it is we that will when we will, but it is He who makes us will what is good, of whom it is said (as he has just now expressed it), 'The will is prepared by the Lord'*. T. Sage gives about fifty references to this quotation in his article 'Praeparatur voluntas a Deo' *Revue des études augustiniennes* 10 (1964), pp. 19-20; See J. Rist, 'Augustine on Free will and Predestination', in *Journal of Theological Studies NS* 20 (1969), n. 1, p. 425.

[206] G.R. Evans 1982, p. 135.

[207] P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* rev. edn (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 398.

[208] AUGUSTINE, *Jul. Op. imp.* VI. 16.

> ante dicebas: 'quod facio bonum, ego facio; quod facio malum, deus facit'. Immo sic est verum: 'quod facis bonum, deus facit, quod facis malum tu facis'.[209]
>
> *If you want to blame your sins on others, as I mentioned, on Fortuna, or fate or the Devil, and not on yourself, and on the other hand want to credit yourself and not God with your good deeds, you are wicked. ... Then he is asked 'What is Fortuna, or what is fate?' And he starts saying that it is the stars which forced him to sin. Notice how step by step his blasphemy is advancing toward God. What was it you were saying just now? 'The good I do, I do; the evil I do, God does.' But in fact the truth is this: the good you do, God does, the evil you do, you do.*

Notice in this context what Augustine said in *Retractationes* about his own use of *Fortuna* in the *Cassiciacum Dialogues*: He deplored the habit of people saying '*Fortuna hoc voluit*' while they should say '*Deus hoc voluit*'.[210]

Augustine changes '*the good I do, I do, the evil I do, God does*', into the other extreme: '*the good I do, God does, the evil I do, I do*'. The first position is overtly flattering: 'I get all the credit, and escape all punishment', while Augustine's view is very negative: 'I deserve all punishments, but receive no credit for the good I do'. What both positions have in common, though, is that somehow, man does not have full control over his own destiny. To some of his congregation it is the stars (*Fortuna*, fate, and ultimately even God), who make man inevitably sin, to Augustine it is God who makes man inevitably do good. Neither allows for the more balanced position, '*The evil I do, I do; the good I do, I do, too*'. Here alone is man free from any determinism (or even fatalism), and such a view is more representative of the Pelagian position.

### 2.1.2. What is Evil?

In imitation of Plotinus, Augustine does not want to tackle in his discourse on evil the question 'What is the cause of evil?' before he has dealt with: 'What is evil?': 'Proinde cum quaeritur unde sit malum, prius quaerendum est quid sit malum'.[211] By reading the (Neo-

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[209] AUGUSTINE, *Sermones* 16B.2; See also AUGUSTINE, *Conf.* IV.iii (4): "Bonum est enim confiteri tibi, domine, et dicere: 'Misere mei: cura animam meam, quoniam peccavi tibi' ... Quam totam illi salubritatem interficere conantur, cum dicunt: 'De caelo tibi est inevitabilis causa peccandi' et 'Venus hoc fecit aut Saturnus aut Mars'. (*'It is good to make confession to you, Lord and to say, 'Have mercy on me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against you' ... They [=astrologers] try to destroy this entire saving doctrine when they say: 'The reason for your sinning is determined by heaven' and 'Venus and Saturn or Mars was responsible for this act'.*') See further AUGUSTINE, *De continentia* v (14): 'Alii Fortunae malunt inputare, quod pecant: quia omnia fortuitis casibus agitari putant nec tamen hoc se fortuita temeritate, sed perspecta ratione sapere atque asseverare conetndunt. Qualis ergo dementia est disputationes suas rationi tribuere et actiones suas casibus subiugare?' ('*Others rather want to ascribe to Fortuna, what sin they commit: who think that all things are driven to and fro by chance accidents, and yet contend that their wisdom and assertion is not of chance rashness, but of ascertained reason. What madness then is it, to ascribe their discussions to reason, and to make their actions subject to accidents!*')

[210] *Retractationes*, I.1: 'verumtamem penitet me sic illic nominasse Fortunam, cum videam homines habere in pessima consuetudine, ubi dici debet: 'hoc Deus voluit', dicere: 'hoc voluit Fortuna'.'

[211] AUGUSTINE, *De natura boni* 4: '*When accordingly it is inquired whence is evil, it must first be inquired what is evil*'. See also AUGUSTINE, *De libero arbitrio* I. iii (6); PLOTINUS, *Enneads* I. viii (1): '*Those inquiring whence evil enters into beings, or rather into a certain order of beings, would be making the best beginning if they established, first of all, what precisely evil is, what constitutes its Nature*'.

)Platonic books and hearing Ambrose's sermons, Augustine came to regard God as being incorporeal, while he also learned to perceive evil as a *privatio boni*, "a privation of the good".[212] It is therefore not something which can exist independently, but, as a parasite, it needed a good to thrive upon. 'Mali enim nulla natura est; sed amisso boni mali nomen accepit'.[213] In short, evil is a corruption of a good substance, but evil is not itself a substance.[214] In this way Augustine could preserve the idea that God is good, and that everything He had created was good, and that there existed no independent kind of reality, apart from God. Further, the corrupted ('sick') beings and their activities God integrated into his just order by divine providence.[215] This Augustine tried to explain in his early dialogue *De Ordine*, and although some progress was made, the apparent contradiction that disorder, which is the result of corruption, can somehow be embraced within a universal order was too difficult at that time to explain to his audience. One of the main arguments Augustine will come up with to answer why he allowed corruption to arise in beings, was that God judged it better to bring Good out of evil, than that there was no evil.[216]

### 2.1.3. Whence Evil?

Although Augustine rejected the idea of an independent force of evil, he nevertheless could save God from being the source of evil, by locating its source within the will of man: *'Evils arise from the voluntary sin of the soul, to which God has given free will'*.[217] In leaving man free to choose, God was according to Augustine not responsible for man eventually choosing to do evil, so that He was not to blame for this 'self-initiated corruption of created spirits'.[218] Since evil was either an individual's bad choice or the punishment suffered for having made such a choice, it was necessary in order to preserve God's justice, that he would not punish the innocent. In other words, man needed to be responsible for his wrong choice, and Augustine therefore thought that free will was the guarantee that man indeed could freely

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[212] AUGUSTINE, *Enchiridion* iii. 11: 'Quid est autem aliud quod malum dicitur, nisi privatio boni?'

[213] AUGUSTINE, *De civ. Dei* XI. 9: 'Evil is not a positive substance; the loss of good has been given the name of evil'. For the possible links between Augustine's view on evil and Plotinus, see J. TORCHIA, 'The Significance of 'Privation' Language in Saint Augustine's Analysis of the Happy Life' *Augustinus* 39 (1994), 533-549. In this illuminating article, one of the key tools with which Augustine tries to resolve the problem of evil, namely the "language of privation" or the "grammar of privation" is laid bare in one of Augustine's early dialogues, *De beata vita.*

[214] J.C. Stark, 'The Problem of Evil: Augustine and Ricoeur' *Augustinian Studies* 13 (1982), p. 113.

[215] J.P. Burns, 'Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16.1 (1988), 9-27: 'Even the defective and disordered activity of these corrupted spirits is ordered into a justified, just and beautiful whole'.

[216] AUGUSTINE, *Enchiridion* 27; see J.A. Mohler, *Late Have I Loved You: An Interpretation of Saint Augustine on human and divine relationships* (New York: New City Press, 1991).

[217] AUGUSTINE, *Contra Fortunatus* 20.

[218] J. P. Burns 1988, p. 9.

choose evil. Here, we land straight into the middle of the Pelagian controversy: how come that unbaptized infants, who were too young to be held responsible for their actions, and therefore could not yet sin, were condemned to eternal punishment? Augustine answers: they share in the sin of Adam. Augustine by then had developed a very bleak picture of human will: 'non posse non peccare' or man could not avoid to sin, such was God's punishment for the fall of the first man.[219] Every fallen man would come into the world with a will which was already evil, impossible to want the good if God did not help him with His grace. Only within this grim picture of man's condition after the fall could Augustine explain reality while preserving God's justice, goodness, and omnipotence. Man's free will was free only in the sense of "free from righteousness". Even for this necessity to sin, man can be held responsible because of his sharing in Adam's sin. I have discussed before God's different role in '*actively working for the salvation of some and passively permitting the perdition of others*'.[220] The issue here is whether man's depraved start in life can be seen as just. This depends on whether we accept man's shared responsibility in the sin of first man. But there is another issue also: could Adam be held responsible for his sin, so that his terrible punishment, in which all share, is just?

The origin and cause of evil ("i.e. corruption of a good"), when it arose within creation can be situated in the initial sin ("falls", "turning away from God") of respectively some angels, and of Eve and Adam. I will first briefly discuss the fall of Adam, and then move on to the fall of some of the angels. At first Augustine thought there was a difference between these two falls, of angels (who became demons) and humans: angels sinned "spontaneously" and humans had been tempted. When reinterpreting the fall of Adam, realising that he has to locate the origin of sin in the will, not in some external circumstance, the difference between the two vanished: both angels and humans had sinned spontaneously through pride, causing the outbreak of evil in the world.[221]

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[219] AUGUSTINE, *De natura et gratia* 49.
[220] J.Wetzel, 'The Recovery of Free Agency in the Theology of St. Augustine', *Harvard Theological Review* 80.1 (1987), p. 124.
[221] I am following here closely the findings of J. P. Burns 1988, pp. 9-27.

## 2.2. The Fall(s)

### 2.2.1. The Fall of Adam: Original Sin

Mankind is born with an evil will, and unless grace intervenes, they will retain an evil will. His necessity to sin, Augustine saw as inherited universal guilt arising from original sin. The whole weight of his view of moral agency in evil now rested on the sin of Adam.[222]

Augustine played down the role of the serpent and Eve in tempting the other to sin, and instead fixed the origin of evil firmly within the will. He insisted that before Eve and Adam bit from the fruit, their will had been already evil. Even before Eve was persuaded by the serpent her will had turned evil, Augustine states, otherwise she would never have consented.[223] The question arises: what made Adam turn his good will into an evil will, i.e. his turning away from the love of God? Or in other words, how come Adam suddenly became proud, and turned towards self-love? Augustine is at a loss in explaining this shift in orientation of will. The story of the Fall in the Bible cannot help him, because it tells the story of how the first humans, with wills already turned evil, enacted their first misdeed: it only informs us how the secret, hidden evil, had come into the open.[224] How can it be that humans, created upright, who were unambiguously good, living in a paradise, would ever deprive themselves from the divine light and turn away from the Supreme good, the true source and goal of their fulfilment?[225]

### 2.2.2. The Angelic Fall

The Angelic Fall poses even greater problems to understand: temptation can now be completely ruled out, since the devil did not yet exist! Augustine needed to explain why only some of the angels (suddenly) slipped away from God and turned to a lower good when the whole creation was still good. He gives in *De civitate Dei* a fictive example which reflects the problem of the angelic fall. He had done something similar when he was discussing freely given grace, and presented Pelagius with the different lots of the twin babies, only this example is completely unrealistic, and therefore much less convincing:

> *Suppose that two men, of precisely similar disposition in mind and body, see the beauty of the same woman's body, and the sight stirs one of them to enjoy her unlawfully, while the other continues*

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222 W.S. Babcock 1988, p. 40.
223 *De civ. Dei* XIV. 13.
224 *De civ. Dei* XIV. 13.
225 For the blessed state Adam and Eve found themselves in before the Fall see *De civitate Dei* XIV. 10.

> *unmoved in his decision of chastity. What do we suppose to be the cause of an evil choice in the one and not in the other? What produced that evil will?*[226]

Having treated every other factor than the will as a constant in this case, Augustine cannot but conclude that the cause of the different reaction has to be situated in the will.

### 2.2.3. Withholding Grace

Augustine suggested that God withheld his grace from some angels, who then subsequently fell, left to their own devices:

> Iste autem, qui, cum boni creati essent, tamen mali sunt (mali propria voluntate, quam bona natura non fecit, nisi cum a bono sponte defecit, ut mali causa non sit bonum, sed defectus a bono), aut minorem acceperunt divini amoris gratiam quam illi, qui in eadem persisterunt...[227]
>
> *Those other angels were created good but have become evil by their own bad will; and this bad will did not originate from their nature, which was good. It came through a voluntary falling away from the good, so that evil is caused not by good, but by falling away from good. Either they received less grace of the divine love than did the others, who continued in that grace...*

Here we have to wonder whether God is not arbitrary in his giving and withholding of grace, and in so doing, whether the bad angels can be still held responsible for lacking this grace, when they are, for no apparent reason, made distinct from the good angels. This again raises the issue of God's discriminatory actions. Since they all were created with a good will, it is hard to see justice in God's decision to withhold his grace to some.

## 2.3. No Cause or a Deficient cause

Another path Augustine follows is that there cannot be an efficient cause for the evil will other than the willing itself.[228] Augustine refutes the idea that the first evil will had no cause, because it then should always have existed. This would lead to positing an eternal principle apart from God (God cannot be the cause of evil!), which would lead to Manichean dualism.[229]

The problem Augustine had in finding a cause for the first evil will might be partly because Plotinus could not help him here. For the (Neo-)Platonist, evil was strongly

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[226] *De civ. Dei* XII. 6.
[227] *De civ. Dei* XII. 9.
[228] *De civ. Dei* XII. 6: 'Huius porro malae voluntatis causa efficiens si quaeratur, nihil invenitur,. Quid est enim quod facit voluntatem malam, cum ipsa faciat opus malum? Ac per hoc mala voluntas efficiens est operi mali, malae autem voluntatis efficiens nihil est' ('*If you try to find the efficient cause of this evil choice there is none to be found. Nothing causes an evil will, since it is the evil will itself which causes the evil act; and that means that the evil choice is the efficient cause of an evil act, whereas there is no efficient cause of an evil choice*'). See also W.S. Babcock 1988, p. 53 n. 18, referring to similar expressions in *De libero arbitrio* II. xx (54) and III. xvii (47).
[229] Evil can only exist within a good nature, so there has to be a preceding goodness of nature wherein it could exist, so that evil cannot be eternally in the way good is.

connected with (formless) matter, and this is something Augustine cannot accept, since the whole creation of God is good. Plotinus also said:

> *One should not ask why an autonomous being decides for the worse rather than the better. An initially slight deviation begins an ever-increasing gulf.*[230]

In finding no cause for such an insignificant deviation, (that initially slight change in the will, which makes one start slipping away from God to a lesser good, i.e. self-love), Augustine is leaning strongly towards a basic Epicurean principle. They maintained that there was an *uncaused* slight swerve in the movement of the atoms, in order to safeguard *man's free will* against Stoic fatalism.[231] The parallel can even be drawn further in the sense that evil stands for disorder and chaos, and this is precisely how the Epicureans perceive their world, since it is based on chance encounters; for Augustine, pride, the root of all evil, was the cause for disorder in society.[232] Augustine cannot accept this alternative interpretation of something which has no cause. However, at least according to W.S. Babcock, that is what he is heading towards if he leaves the turning away from the good uncaused:

> But if the first evil will is simply uncaused, it will have the status of an entirely accidental happening, and will no more count as the agent's own than it would if it could be ascribed to an efficient cause.[233]

Augustine's solution is that, although a wrong choice cannot be caused by an efficient cause, since an evil itself is not effective, but defective (= defecting from God), the cause of an evil will is therefore deficient not efficient:

> Nemo igitur quaereat efficientem causam malae voluntatis; non enim est efficiens sed deficiens, quia nec illa effectio sed defectio. Deficere namque ab eo, quod summe est, ad id, quod minus est, hoc est incipere habere voluntatem malam. Causas porro defectionum istarum, cum efficientes non sint, ut dixi, sed deficientes, velle invenire tale est, ac si quisquam velit videre tenebras vel audire silentium, quod tamen utrumque nobis notum est, neque illud nisi per oculos, neque hoc nisi per aures, non sane in specie, sed in speciei privatione.[234]
>
> *The truth is that one should not try to find an efficient cause for a bad will. It is not a matter of efficiency, but of deficiency; the evil will itself is not effective but defective. For to defect from Him who is the supreme Existence, to something of less reality, this is to begin to have an evil will. To try to discover the causes of such defection – deficient, not efficient causes – is like trying to see darkness or to hear silence. Yet we are familiar with darkness and silence, and we can only be aware of them by means of eyes and ears, but this is not by perception but by absence of perception.*

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[230] PLOTINUS, *Enneads* III. ii (4), as presented in H. Chadwick, 'Providence and the Problem of Evil' in *Congresso internazionale su S. Agostino nel xvi centenario della conversione* (Studia Ephemeridis "Augustinianum") (Rome, 1986), p. 160.

[231] See part I, the section on Epicureanism.

[232] See D.J. Macqueen, 'Contemptus Dei: St. Augustine on the Disorder of Pride in Society, and its Remedies', *Recherches augustiniennes* 9 (1973), 227-293; notice also the primacy of pride in '*initium omnis peccati superbia*'.

[233] W.S. Babcock, 'Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency', *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16:1 (1988), 28-55 (p. 46).

[234] *De civ. Dei* XI. 7.

W.S. Babcock rightly criticizes, I think, the concept of a deficient cause.[235] Augustine is not very helpful in making sense with this concept, and it is difficult to see a difference between his idea of a deficient cause and no cause at all, especially when he speaks of the angelic fall as a defection '*whose cause is lacking*'.[236] Augustine acknowledges the difficulties involved in his answer when he locates the cause of an evil will among those things which cannot be known:

> Si enim motus iste, id est aversio voluntatis a Domino Deo, sine dubitatione peccatum est, num possumus auctorem peccati Deum dicere? Non erit ergo iste motus ex Deo. Unde igitur erit? Ita quaerenti tibi, si respondeam nescire me, fortasse eris tristior: sed tamen vera responderim. Sciri enim non potest quod nihil est.[237]
>
> *We cannot doubt that that movement of the will, that turning away from the Lord God, is sin; but surely we cannot say that God is the author of sin? God, then, will not be the cause of that movement; but what will be its cause? If you ask this, and I answer that I do not know, probably you will be saddened. And yet that would be a true answer. That which is nothing cannot be known.*

Also in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicis* Augustine states that nothing can be said about the question where evil comes from.[238]

## 2.4. "Nothing" can Exculpate God from Being the Author of Evil

### 2.4.1. The Ontological Origin of an Evil Will

It seems that the *parvum intervallum*[239] between God as the author of souls and souls as the authors of evil becomes too narrow to acquit God from being responsible for evil.[240]

However, Augustine offers another argument to separate God from evil: it was made possible for both humans and angels to become corrupted in the first place because they were made *ex nihilo*:

> Ac per hoc ut natura sit, ex eo habet quod a Deo facta est; ut autem ab eo quod est deficiat, ex hoc quod de nihilo facta est.[241]

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[235] W.S. Babcock 1988, p. 46.

[236] AUGUSTINE, *De civ.Dei* XII .9: 'cuius defectionis etiam causa utique deficit'.

[237] AUGUSTINE, *De libero arbitrio* II. xx (54).

[238] AUGUSTINE, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* II. viii (11): 'Deus vero auctor essentiae est: nec aliqua essentia potest videri esse, quod in qua fuerit cogit non esse. Dicitur aliquid unde non sit inconvenientia; nam unde sit nihil dici potest' ('*But God is the author of essence, and there is no essence which, inasmuch as it is, leads to non-being. Thus, we have said what incompatibility does not come from, since nothing can be said as to whence it comes*'.

[239] AUGUSTINE, *De libero arbitrio* I. ii (4): 'Credimus autem ex uno Deo omnia esse quae sunt; et tamen non esse peccatorum auctorem Deum. Movet autem animum, si peccata ex iis animabus sunt quas Deus creavit, illae autem animae ex Deo, quomodo non *parvo intervallo* peccata referantur in Deum?' ('*We believe that all things which exist are from one God; and yet God is not the author of sins. The difficulty for the mind is this. If sins originate with souls which God has created, and which therefore have their origin from God, how are sins not to be charged against God at least through a narrow interval?*)"

[240] W.S. Babcock 1988, p. 34.

*Consequently, although the will derives its existence, as a nature, from its creation by God, its falling away from its true being is due to its creation out of nothing.*

Because God created out of nothing, not out of His own nature, His creation could not be immutable, and was therefore subject to change. This idea would allow only the possibility of defecting, not its necessity. By linking the cause of an evil will with the mutability of creation because it is created out of nothing, Augustine brings together evil, which is "nothing, non-being" with the moment of creation. Since man is created "out of nothing", he always tends towards "nothing", and has thus a choice between "being" or "non-being", virtue or vice.

However, in this scheme, man's free will is not so much a good thing "deliberately" created by God, it can also be perceived as a necessary consequence of God, who is Supreme Being, creating out of "nothing", which is "No-Being". The fact that man is thus created *ex nihilo* can account for the cause of an evil will, and of this *nihil*, Augustine says, nothing can be said or known: 'Sciri enim non potest quod nihil est'.[242]

Since the cause of sin must be linked with man's free will to keep him accountable for his sin, this creation out of "nothing" seems to have left inscrutable traces ("scars?") within man, rendering him potentially weak.[243] 'However, cannot God be then responsible for the corruption of things, because he made them *ex nihilo*, and hence, liable to corruption?' Judith Stark asks.[244] Augustine too easily shifts from this question to answering the question why God permits corruption, claiming that this is included in divine providence.[245]

### 2.4.2. Augustine's Concept of 'Nihil' and Manichean Dualism

Augustine's fascination with "nothing" and privation language in general is noticeable in his work. Already in *De magistro*, an early dialogue with his son Adeodatus, the issue is discussed when language is debated. After it is agreed upon that every sign must mean something, the meaning of the words of a line of Virgil (*Aeneid* II. 659) is discussed:

si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui.

*If it pleases the gods that nothing be left of so great a city.*

Already with the second word they are confronted with a knotty problem: '*Nihil,* quid aliud significat, nisi id quod non est?' ('*What else can "nihil" signifies, except that what is not?*'),

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[241] *De civ. Dei* XIV. 13.

[242] AUGUSTINE, *De libero arbitrio* II. xx (54).

[243] 'Augustine recognizes that he weakness in created things lies in the fact that they are *ex nihilo*', J.M. Rist states ('Augustine on Free Will and Predestination', *Journal of Theological Studies NS* 20 (1969), 420-447 (p. 441).

[244] Judith Stark, 'The Problem of Evil: Augustine and Ricœur', *Augustinian Studies* 13 (1982), 111-121 (pp. 114-115).

[245] Judith Stark 1982, p. 115, citing AUGUSTINE, *Contra epistolam manichaei quam vocant fundamenti* xxxviii (44).

Adeodatus asks.[246] Augustine, however, sees a problem in this statement, and refuses to consent: 'quod autem non est, nullo modo esse aliquid potest' (*'What is not cannot be something'*).[247]

This intriguing philosophical problem[248] will appear again and again throughout Augustine's works, forming part of his use of privation language to defend his idea that evil is non-Being and that man is responsible for his evil actions.

Another example of the importance of the meaning of *nihil* we find in his work *De natura boni (contra manichaeos)*. In chapter 25 he comments on the words of *John* 1:3: 'Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil' as follows:

> Neque enim audienda sunt deliramenta hominum, qui *nihil* hoc loco aliquid intelligendum putant [...] quia ipsum *nihil* in fine sententiae positum est.[249]
>
> *We are not to listen to the nonsense of men who think that in this passage "nothing" must mean something [...] because the word nihil is put at the end of the sentence.*

In *De beata vita*, too, the word *tenebrae* (=darkness), for example, signifies the notion of a lack, a privation (i.e. of light), intended to *'negate that which exists, rather than to affirm that which does not exist'*.[250] Augustine use of the word *tenebrae* is particularly interesting, since it can give us a clue what he actually has done with the Manichean notion of substantial evil, which is presented by them as the "Realm of Darkness".[251] By claiming that darkness is the absence of light, not something which exists in itself, we find here a parallel with evil, which is essentially the absence of good, and can be further regarded as a "non-Being" opposed to "Being", which is God. The connection between darkness and non-being can also be found in *Enarrationes in psalmos*, VII.19:

> Iam vero tenebris significari peccata [...] non quod alia sit natura tenebrarum. Omnis enim natura in quantum natura est, esse cogitur. Esse autem, ad lucem pertinet, non esse, ad tenebras. Qui ergo deserit eum a quo factus est, et inclinatur in id unde factus est, id est in nihilum, in hoc peccato tenebratur.
>
> *Sins are signified by darkness [...] not that there is any nature in darkness. For all nature, in so far as it is nature, is compelled to be. Now being belongs to Light, not-being to Darkness. He then that leaves Him by whom he was made, and inclines to that whence he was made, that is, to nothing, is in this sin 'endarkened'.*

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[246] AUGUSTINE, *De magistro* II (3).
[247] AUGUSTINE, *De magistro* II (3).
[248] 'How does one meaningfully speak about that which does not exist? (J. Torchia, 'The Significance of "Privation' Language" in Saint Augustine's Analysis of the Happy Life', *Augustinus* 39 (1994), p. 542).
[249] AUGUSTINE, *De natura boni* xxv: 'Neque enim audienda sunt deliramenta hominum, qui *nihil* hoc loco aliquid intelligendum putant'.
[250] J. Torchia 1994, p. 543; AUGUSTINE, *De beata vita* IV. 29-30.
[251] On the Manichean cosmology, see J.P. Maher, 'Saint Augustine and Manichean Cosmogony', *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979), 91-101, which demonstrates how accurate Augustine's account was of the Manichean cosmogony in, for instance, his *De haeresibus* 46.

Maybe in this link lies Augustine's inheritance of Manicheism. In transferring the conflict between the "Realm of Light" and the "Realm of Darkness" to a metaphysical tension between Being (God) and Non-being (*nihil*), he could claim that evil did not exist, since it belongs to "non-being", while its influence could still be experienced, since creation happened "*ex nihilo*" and is therefore mutable. J. Torchia states: 'In Augustinian terms, virtue and vice assume a clear metaphysical significance, finding their referents in being (esse) and non-being (non-esse)'.[252]

It is in this context that a perplexing eternal dualism is being preserved within Augustine's doctrine of good and evil, i.e. *being* and *non-being*. At the same time, because of the ambiguity of non-being, Augustine can claim that one of the two antagonists, is "non-existent". If Augustine were to deny this tension, then God is all there "is", and it becomes impossible for God to create something outside of his nature, something of which he is not fully responsible for. If he accepts this tension, then there is something besides God, namely "nothing", which causes this tension, making His creation mutable, and we glide into a real dualism. In denying that "*nihil*" is something, Augustine also has to explain how this "*nihil*" can stand at the origin of man's mutability. Augustine's solution has more something of a clever ploy than a real answer to the question. He does not have to go into the matter further, because nothing *more* can be said about "nothing", as it is literally shrouded in darkness.

It might be, in the end, that 'even Adam had no real choice; the elements of nothingness in his nature made his fall an inexplicable and (for him and all others who would fall similarly) irresistible phenomenon'.[253]

## 3. The Noble Christians: Pelagius and Julian of Eclanum

Thus far I have said little about Augustine's fiercest literary opponents to his doctrine of freely given grace, predestination, and original sin, namely Pelagius and Julian of Eclanum. I will limit myself here to a few remarks which are relevant to the subject of this thesis.

The British layman Pelagius (350 – 425) had stayed a while at Rome and was one of the many who fled in AD 410 when Alaric sacked the city. He was well established among the

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[252] J. Torchia 1994, p. 543.
[253] J.M. Rist 1969, p. 442.

aristocracy of Rome, and his views, so at odds with Augustine's, show elements of traditional ideology.

Julian of Eclanum, a married bishop of the small town of Eclanum, was a well-off landowner, who also belonged to an ecclesiastical family. He pursued the cause of Pelagianism with such vigour and intellectual brilliance, that he forced Augustine to defend his orthodox position to the end of his life.

At the beginning of *De natura et gratia* Augustine commented on Pelagius as someone showing an ardent zeal against those who when in their sin ought to censure their will, instead blamed their nature. This sentiment, he says, even authors of secular literature have severely censured with the exclamation: 'falso queritur de natura sua genus humanum' ('*The human race falsely complains of its own nature*') (SALLUST, *BeJu* 1.1).[254] This brings us to the heart of Pelagius' teaching, since he wished to preserve, in opposition to Augustine, some features of traditional ideology. Carol Harrison lists three elements which Pelagianism had in common with traditional ideology: man's moral and intellectual autonomy, and the possibility of perfectibility in life.[255] Pelagians therefore denied the doctrine of Original sin, but wished to remain in the orthodoxy of the Church.[256] This is perhaps one of the main reasons why they accepted the practice of infant baptism, which, in their belief system was not necessary, because there were no sins yet to wash away.

They saw a great danger in Augustine's teaching of deteriorating the already lax morality within the Church: stressing that man was bound to sin because of his inner weakness does not encourage someone to live according to high moral standards. Instead, Pelagians propagated that the perfect life was possible in this life, through the purifying power of baptism.[257] To Augustine, baptism seemed merely "a superficial shaving of sin", whereby the root had undergone no drastic transformation.[258]

Pelagians did not deny the working of grace in one's life. They denied that an inner, preceding grace was needed to restore man's vitiated will, and they rather saw grace as a real support of the will (an *adesse bonae voluntati*).[259] God was no dictator. He did not force people

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[254] AUGUSTINE, *De natura et gratia* i (1).
[255] Carol Harrison 2000, p. 100.
[256] G. Bonner calls them a pressure group within the Church (in 'Pelagianism and Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), 33-51 (p. 36).
[257] Carol Harrison 2000, p. 104.
[258] P. Brown, 'Pelagius and His Supporters', in *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 183-207 (repr. of *Journal of Theological Studies NS* 19 (1968), 93-114 (p. 202).
[259] M. Lamberigts, 'Julian of Aeclanum on Grace: Some Considerations', in *Studia Patristica* 27 (Oxford 1991) (Leuven, 1993), pp. 342-349 (p. 347).

to obedience, but engaged more as a partner with those who wanted to imitate Christ's way of life.[260]

Overall, Augustine and Pelagius looked differently upon their own lives, and from there tried to understand the Christian faith. Augustine's relationship with God was one of a child's dependence; Pelagius and Julian saw God more as a helping partner. As argued in the chapter on *Confessiones*, Augustine's life was very much influenced by his surrounding, and the relationships with people who were dear to him. It is unlikely that Pelagius and Julian had similar experiences in life. Perhaps the illustration of the different classes of sailors heading towards the *portus philosophiae* in *De beata vita*,[261] can help to explain their different point of views: someone who quite effortlessly manages to reach this haven '*with a slight effort and an indolent stroke of the oars*' is bound to end up with a different view of his natural capacities than someone who needed a blow of *Fortuna* to get there, and who without it, might otherwise have been sailing straight to the Sirens.

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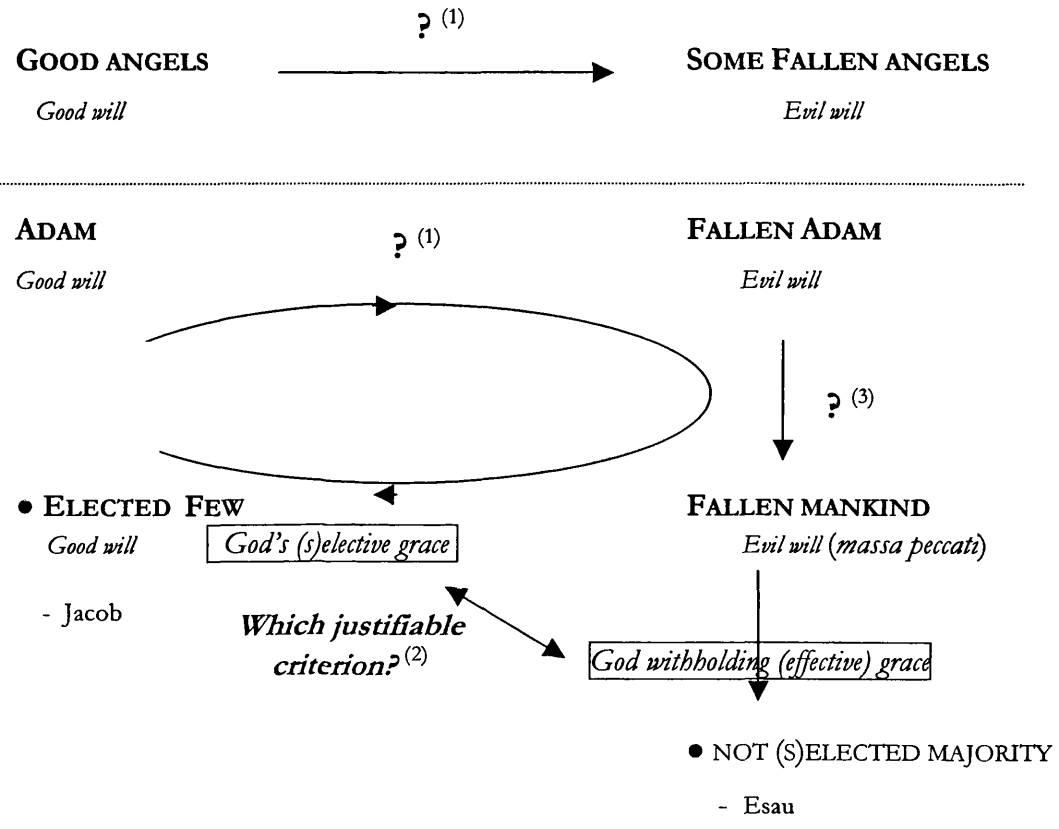
[260] M. Lamberigts 1993, p. 348.
[261] AUGUSTINE, *De beata vita* i. 2-4.

# THE DOUBLE MYSTERY CONCERNING THE CHANGE OF WILL




- (1) What caused the fall of only some of the angels and of Adam?
- (2) On what justifiable criterion does God (s)elect a small group of fallen people to lead them to the eternal happy life? Why did he choose Jacob and not (also) Esau?

(- (3) Is it just that every newborn baby is already crippled in his will because of Adam's sin?)

# CONCLUSION

This thesis argued that the idea of *Fortuna (caeca)* was an important factor in the changeover from traditional ideology to Augustinianism. The first part focused on the concept of *Fortuna* in Roman society, and its relation to traditional Roman ideology. Originally a goddess of fecundity and offering protection for important transitions, *Fortuna* turned more vicious at a time when the first symptoms of a disintegrating society began to show.
Sallust's analysis of Rome's history goes well with the findings of the biologist M. Ridley (1997), in that trust and *concordia* are important pillars of a well functioning society. They engender cooperation, so that the majority of people willingly sacrifice their immediate self-interest for the welfare of the group, knowing that this investment will pay itself back some way or another. Once distrust sets in and self-interest begins to grow, the insecurity and unpredictability factor within society dramatically increases. Sallust recognizes that fear of a foreign enemy helped to preserve unity among the Romans. The instability of society reached in his time such height with the civil wars that it even caused a corrosion of the language, so that words lost their true meaning. Detrimental to the Roman nobility, who embodied republican ideology, was the breakdown of the connection between exercising *virtus* and receiving an appropriate reward (*sc.* worldly glory and honours).

One would have expected that princeps Augustus offered a new stability, so that the influence of *Fortuna* would lessen in the *principate*, but this was not the case. One of the reasons was that while the political situation had drastically altered, with the elite of Roman society losing its *libertas*, the traditional ideology was being preserved. This discrepancy between ideology and reality proved to be a fertile ground for the idea of a *Fortuna caeca.*

Seneca's and Lucan's writings reveal how difficult it was for the nobility to find a right way to deal with the new situation, now that they had lost control over "their" *respublica.* Some senators wished to withdraw, others rebelled. Seneca tried to uphold something of the old traditional ideology in life: one had to stand one's ground with one's *virtus*, not against a foreign foe, but against the assaults of *Fortuna*, whereby *virtus* became its own reward. The growing belief in astrology was another sign that the aristocracy felt no longer in control of their lives: they could not act in their time-honoured ways without their *libertas.* Whereas Seneca taught that everything that happened was just, Lucan began to question this assumption, and his use of *fatum* became indistinguishable from *Fortuna caeca.*

In late Antiquity, after the chaos of the third century, there seemed to have been a deeper need to escape one's fate, hence the success of Oriental mystery religions. In the

West a greater distance came to exist between court and senate. Because the emperor no longer resided at Rome, the senate seemed to have gained more power in "their" Rome, but this was only on a local level.

(Neo-)Platonism brought about a real break with the materialism of Stoicism and Epicureanism. The existence of a transcendental world offered a realm which was immune for the assaults of *Fortuna caeca*. Civic *virtus* became less commendable: only tranquil contemplation of the divine could render the true happy life. Detachment from the worldly goods of *Fortuna* was now being promoted together with a (private) life of contemplation. There were several aspects of (Neo-)Platonism which commended itself to the Roman aristocracy: obtaining the happy life through exercising *virtus* remained a fundamental part of their ideology. The aristocracy's privileged status, even their identity was built upon traditional ideology, and that was why they were so adamant to preserve it. The traditional call to engage in public life was therefore not forgotten. However, many came to hold more ambiguous feelings towards holding a public office: on the one hand, it remained an honour, on the other hand, it became a burden.

Another important element of (Neo-)Platonism in line with traditional ideology was that it essentially preserved an elitist way of thinking. Only a few men, through a strenuous effort of their (own) intellectual *virtus*, could enjoy the vision of God.

Augustine was a humble provincial African, who hoped to gain social promotion for himself and his family via a successful worldly career. His first thirty(!) years were almost entirely devoted to fulfil his worldly ambitions, and everything else, had to play a secondary role in his life. Under the impulse of Cicero's *Hortensius*, he became less satisfied with this superficial way of life, and he agreed with a group of friends to retire as soon as possible to a leisured life of philosophy. Even in AD 386 it was still possible that Augustine would decide to remain in public life a few years longer to seek further promotion, and only then to embark upon a dignified leisure, thereby remaining within the confines of traditional ideology.

Something happened which made him for the rest of his life vigorously denounce such a 'conceited' life: he suddenly fully embraced Christian ideology. More important for this present study, he came to understand *Fortuna* in a very different, almost opposite way. Crucial at his conversion moment was his decision to take a seeming chance occurrence (a nearbychild's chant "tolle, lege") to be God's helping hand. It marked the beginning of an alternative view on chance events, which eventually would lead to his unique doctrine of freely given divine grace.

If we accept that Augustine was honestly revealing his true intimate self in *Confessiones*, then it is possible to answer the question why such a trivial incident could have had such a huge impact on his life. The child's song was remarkably in tune with his own true self, which only just before had emerged from deep within through a flood of tears. Until then Augustine felt himself utterly incapable to obey his own command, resenting what would have entailed a total submission to his mother, who daily prayed that her son might receive baptism. The chant of the child in combination with his own creative thinking made Augustine realize he could safely run into the arms of God, without fear of annihilation: instead of obeying his mother, he obeyed this anonymous angelic voice. If we acknowledge the tremendous impact of this one moment in Augustine's life as it is described in *Confessiones*, then his later excuse of ill-health to resign from his position can be explained: also in this adversity he sees God's blessing, in what others must have regarded as a vicious blow of *Fortuna*. He needed at that time such an excuse in order to escape the social pressure coming from his surrounding to obtain even greater successes in his worldly career. By throwing himself upon God, Augustine gained greater self-confidence, especially around those who were closest to him, because he now wished to obey and serve God, and not (merely) them.

At Cassiciacum Augustine tried to persuade his friends to join his little philosophical community, which required following him into baptism. Most of them refused to do so. Despite this setback, there now was someone more important than his friends, even than his mother, namely God, who was fail-safe to trust. The fact that Augustine so closely identified himself with God can partly explain his newly won freedom and sense of self-coherence: yes, he is utterly dependent on God, but it is a dependence which at the same time gives him a self-assurance and independence from others. This (blind) trust in God requires a firm belief in His providential and just order.

In the maturing of his thoughts, through a deeper self-knowledge and a deeper understanding of God, mainly inspired by Paul's letter to Romans, Augustine arrives at his highly controversial doctrine of grace, predestination and original sin. His vigorous defence of these distinctive ideas reveals how important God was for his self-coherence, and how great his fear was that he again would be dispersed in a multiplicity of earthly goods (such as his friends) if someone would question his view of the Chrisian God and His salvation plan. Incapable of relying on himself, his doctrine of predestination is his guarantee that God will lead him firmly to his true self and to the happy life. In order to secure the overbearing aspect of God's power, Augustine has to fall back on the inscrutability of God's ways in life, and accept that, for whatever reason, He is only prepared to show mercy to a handpicked

few, namely the elect ones. Nevertheless, Augustine's view runs the risk of failing where it all began: the God he believes in shows some traits of a blind *Fortuna*, because He, too, can be seen bestowing His spiritual goods (His grace) without regard for merit, when leading His arbitrarily (s)elected *sancti* to a predestined blessed life.

# APPENDICES

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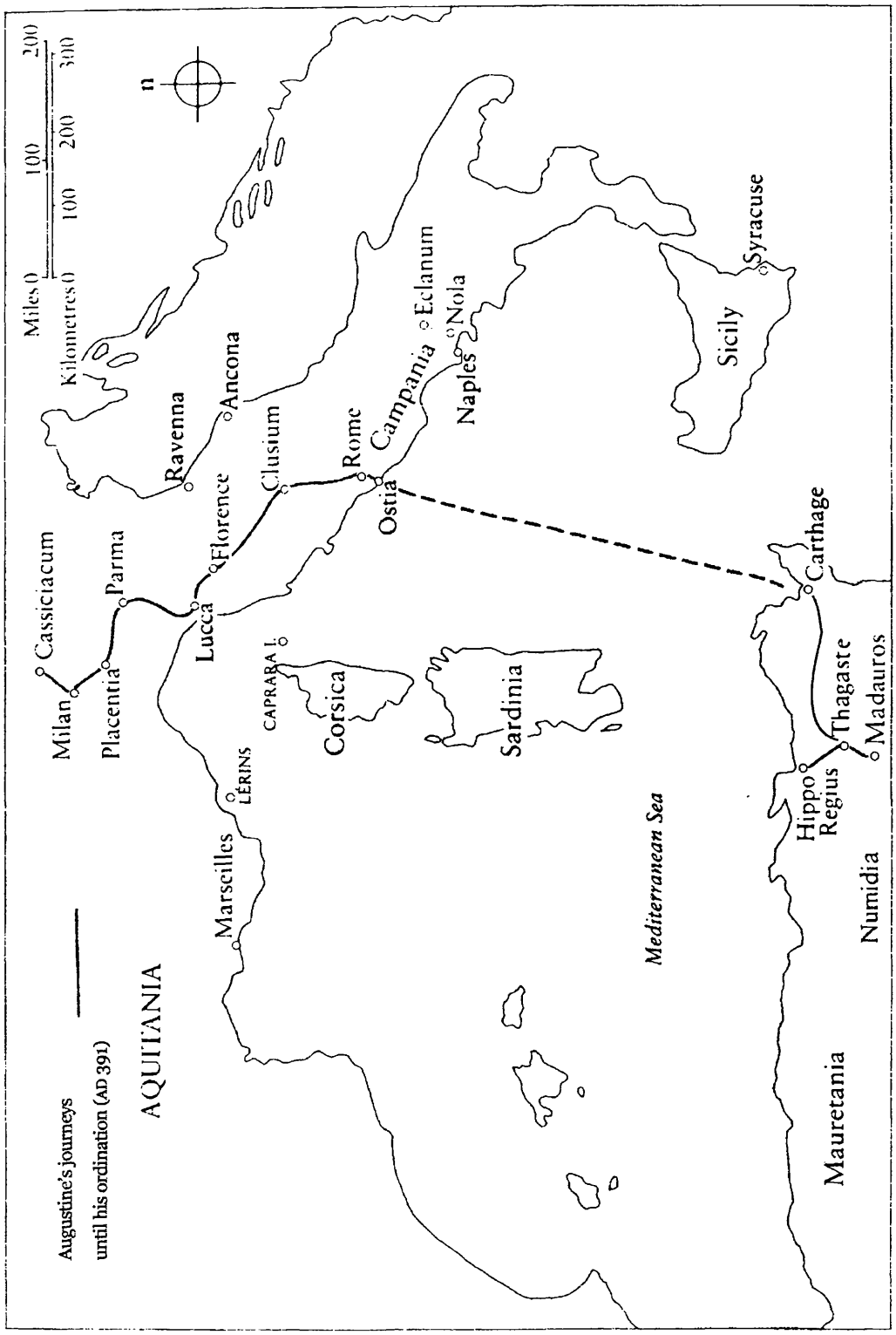
# BIBLIOGRAPHY

# APPENDIX A: MAP OF AUGUSTINE'S JOURNEYS

Until his ordination (AD 391)



# APPENDIX B

## THE TERM *FORTUNA* IN THE WORKS OF AUGUSTINE (TOTAL: 110)

*DE ACADEMICIS:* 25

*DE BEATA VITA:* 5

*DE ORDINE:* 4

*RETRACTATIONES*[*]*:* 6

*DE MUSICA:* 1

*DE LIBERO ARBITRIO:* 1

*EPISTULAE*[°]*:* 6

*QUAESTIONUM IN HEPTATEUCHUM LIBRI SEPTEM*[⊥]*:* 4

*SPECULUM:* 1

*ENARRATIONES IN PSALMOS*[♠]*:* 6

*SERMONES*[♠]*:* 10

*DE CONTINENTIA:* 1

*DE DISCIPLINA CHRISTIANA:* 1

*DE CIVITATE DEI:* 32

*CONTRA FAUSTUM:* 1

*DE PECCATORUM MERITIS ET REMISSIONE ET DE BAPTISMO PARVULORUM*[♦]*:* 1

*DE NATURA ET ORIGINE ANIMAE:* 1

*CONTRA DUAS EPISTULAS PELIGIANORUM:* 3

*CONTRA IULIANUM:* 1

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[*] The mentioning of 6 times the term *Fortuna* in the *Retractationes* is for the sole purpose to express regret for having used the word *Fortuna* so often in *Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita*, and *De ordine*, and this is why I place this late work just after the early dialogues.

[°] Two are in letter 3, which is written just after writing the *Contra Academicos*, and clearly can be seen as an accompanying letter to this work. One is in *epistula* 138, two are in *epistula* 194, and another one in 246. In *epistula* 138 the word *Fortuna* appears in a quotation of Juvenal (VI.277-295). The letter (AD 412) is directed to Marcellinus to answer the questions of the pagan Volusianus concerning the difficulties he has with the Christian belief. It is a very important document for the relation between Christian faith and Roman Empire. The last letter (246) is addressed to Lampadius to answer a question concerning fatum and *Fortuna*.

[⊥] 3 of the 4 appear in *quaestio* 91, and deals with the correct translation of the word ε□τ□χη, translated in the Latin as "*felix*", to avoid the easily misinterpreted word "*fortuna*" (/*Fortuna*).

[♠] These appearances of *Fortuna* (*Enarrationes in psalmos*: 6 + *Sermones*: 10) deal with one topic: one should not blame *Fortuna*, nor *fatum*, nor the devil (*diabolus*) for one's sins, only oneself.

[♦] This last group of works belong to the anti-Pelagian writings. Augustine stresses that although the gift of grace dos not depend on man's merit, this does not mean that it is given by a capricious *Fortuna*, or according to fate: God gives grace for just reasons, which are unknown to man. *Epistula* 194 deals also with this issue.

# APPENDIX C

## ABRIDGED CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF AUGUSTINE'S PUBLIC LIFE (AD 354 – AD 430)*

### BIRTH

13 November AD 354 at Thagaste (Numidia)

Father: Aurelius Patricius, decurion of Thagaste

(*Mother*: Monnica)

### EDUCATION (AD 361 - AD 374)

| | |
|---|---|
| *autumn* AD 361 - *summer* AD 366: | local (primary) school at Thagaste |
| *autumn* AD 366 - *summer* AD 369: | grammar school at Madauros |
| AD 369 - AD 370: | idle year at home |
| *autumn* AD 370 - *summer* AD 374: | university at Carthage, "major": Rhetoric |
| - AD 370/371: | death of Patricius |
| - AD 370/371: | takes a consort |
| - summer AD 372: | birth of a son: Adeodatus |

### WORLDLY CAREER (AD 374 – AD 386)

| | |
|---|---|
| *autumn* AD 374 - *summer* AD 376#: | grammarian at Thagaste |
| *autumn* AD 376 - *summer* AD 383: | municipal professor of Rhetoric at Carthage |
| - AD 380: publication of *De pulchro et apto* | |
| *autumn* AD 383 - *spring* AD 384: | private teacher of Rhetoric at Rome |
| *autumn* AD 384 - *October* AD 386: | imperial appointed professor of Rhetoric at Milan |
| - 1 January AD 385: | delivers panegyric at inauguration of consul Bauto |
| - AD 385/386: | arrangement of a (career) marriage with Milanese aristocratic girl; dismissal of consort; failed Epicurean project |

*October* AD 386: { sudden resignation from office on grounds of ill-health; cancellation of projected marriage

### CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE (AD 386 – AD 391)

*October* AD 386 - *early March* AD 387: "*otium liberale*" at Cassiciacum

writing the philosophical dialogues ***De Academicis***, ***De beata vita***, ***De ordine***, (based on actual dialogues held end October – November AD 386), and ***Soliloquia***

| | |
|---|---|
| *early March* - *end of April* AD 387: | instruction and baptism by bishop Ambrose at Milan |
| - 10 March - 23 April: | enrolment as a *competens* in the church to prepare for baptism. |
| - 23-24 April AD 387: | baptism (with Alypius and Adeodatus) at Vigil of Easter |

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* This table does not profess to be 100 % correct. I have decided to give, wherever possible, detailed chronological information, so that Augustine's life becomes more factual. Reasonable guesses are in this case more desirable than vague references. It gives a false, but welcome, sense that we can, as it were, follow exactly the footsteps of Augustine.

# H. Chadwick thinks Augustine taught two years at Thagaste (AD 373-375), and began teaching at Carthage from AD 376 onwards. J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, p. 203) presumes this was only one year (AD 375 – AD 376).

*May* AD 387 – *late autumn* AD 387: travelling home and stuck in Ostia

- autumn AD 387: (death of his mother Monnica)

*late autumn AD 387 - summer* AD 388: return to Rome

writing *De quantitate animae, De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, and book I of *De libero arbitrio.*

*late summer* AD 388: sails back to Africa and returns to his home in Thagaste[1]

AD 388 - AD 391: founding "monastic" community of *servi Dei* on his estate.

- *c.* AD 390: Death of his son Adeodatus

## ECCLESIASTICAL CAREER (AD 391 – AD 430)

*spring* AD 391: (forcibly) ordained priest at the local Catholic Church of Hippo

AD 391 - AD 395: priest-monk of Catholic Church at Hippo

- 28 August AD 392: public debate with Fortunatus the Manichee
- December AD 393: expounding of Catholic creed at General Church Council of Africa

AD 395: consecrated coadjutor bishop of Hippo

AD 395 - AD 430: bishop-monk of Catholic Church at Hippo

*c.* AD 397: writing ***Confessiones***

AD 413 - AD 426: writing ***De civitate Dei***

AD 426: nominates successor (Heraclius), who takes over some of his more tiresome duties

28 August AD 430: Death of Augustine, after a few weeks of illness, during the siege of Hippo

[1] For this date see J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 115.

## APPENDIX D: AUGUSTINUS AND HIS MUNICIPAL DUTIES

Augustinus managed to avoid several times his municipal duties, first by obtaining the public post of grammarian in his hometown (AD 374 - AD 376), and then by becoming public professor of Rhetoric, first in Carthage (AD 376 - AD 383), and then in Milan (AD 384 - AD 386). In AD 391, through his (forced!) ordination to the priesthood, he again received official exemption from his responsibilities as a *decurion* of Thagaste. Laws in the Theodosian code demanded *decurions* who entered the clergy to renounce all their possessions, in order to demonstrate that they were serious about their ordination. They had to hand over their property to the people who would replace them in the town council.[1] Augustinus donated his inherited land property to the local Catholic church.[2]

Apart from the year he worked as a *private* teacher of Rhetoric at Rome (AD 383 - AD 384)[3], there remains a gap of some five years (AD 386 - AD 391), during which Augustine was legally required to perform his duties as a *decurion* in his hometown Thagaste, where he was living as a *servus Dei.* He was no longer protected by his imperial post, he could not fall back on a senatorial title, and he was not yet a member of the clergy. C. Lepelley assumes that Augustinus' brother Navigius fulfilled these legal obligations, while Augustinus lived an ascetic life at home as a *servus Dei*, without following a precise monastic rule. He concludes:

> 'Ceci montre qu'en fait, on pouvait souvent se glisser à travers les mailles du filet dans lequel la législation impériale prétendait emprisonner les membres des familles décurionales'.[4]

Perhaps his fame as a former imperial rhetor combined with his heroic renunciation of his worldly life in order to become a humble *servus Dei* in his hometown, saved him from prosecution. A letter from Nebridius (AD 388) indicates, however, that Augustinus was not completely free at Thagaste:

> Itane est, mi Augustine, fortitudinem ac tolerantiam negotiis civium praestas, necdum tibi redditur illa exoptata cessatio? Quaeso, qui te tam bonum homines interpellant? Credo qui nesciunt quid ames, quid concupiscas. Nullusne tibi est amicorum, qui eis amores referat tuos? Nec Romanianus, nec Lucinianus? Me certe audiant. Ego clamabo, ego testabor te Deum amare, illi servire atque inhaerere cupere.[5]
>
> *My dear Augustine, it is true? – that you show such courage and patience in serving your fellow citizens, and that the much-desired leisure is not granted to you? I ask you, why do they impose on you when you are so good? I suppose it must be because they do not know what you love and what you desire. But is there none of your friends who could declare your preferences to them? Why not Romanianus? Or Lucinianus? Surely, they would listen to me. I will shout, I will testify that God is your love, that you long to serve Him and cling to Him.*

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[1] C. Lepelley, *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire*, vol. I: *La permanence d'une civilisation municipale* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1979), p. 285.
[2] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* CXXVI (7).
[3] Only publicly appointed teachers were officially exempted from their curial obligations.
[4] C. Lepelley 1979, I, pp. 286-287.
[5] AUGUSTINE, *Epistula* V.

# APPENDIX E

## STATISTICS OF THE TESTIMONIES OF SALLUST IN AUGUSTINE'S WORK

H. Hagendahl's *Augustine and the Latin Classics*[6] provides us with valuable information to assess Augustine's handling of Sallust's work. It confirms Augustine's renewed interest in his school author when writing *De civitate Dei*: 64 of the 95 testimonies (67%!) are to be found within this polemical work. The concentration on *Bellum Catilinae* is manifest: 72 of the 95 quotations are taken from this shortest monograph.[7] Of these 72, 48 can be found in *De civitate Dei*, of which 40 within Books I – V, i.e. the part wherein Augustine demolishes the idealised picture the pagans held of their revered Rome. Augustine quotes only in *De civitate Dei* from Sallust's *Historiae*.

Almost all of the 95 quotations are derived from Sallust's introductory chapters (*Bellum Catilinae* 1-16, *Bellum Jugurthinum* 1-4, *Historiae* I.1), and from his digressions.[8] In these sections Sallust presented his reflective thoughts on the history of mankind and Rome. It confirms that he was primarily interested in Sallust's moralising view of Roman history. For most of the actual historical facts he had recourse to Livy (59 (or 64?) BC – AD 17) and his epitomists.[9]

| Chronological distribution of the testimonies[◊] | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AD | | *Cat.* | *Iug.* | *Hist.* | Total |
| 386-411 | *Beata v.*, *Conf.*, *Ep.* 82; 104; *Serm.* 81,9 | 6 | 1 | | 7 |
| 411-412 | *Ep.* 137; 138; 143 | 7 | 2 | | 9 |
| 413-426 | - *De civ. Dei* | 48 | 3 | 13 | 64 |
| | - *Ep.* 153; 166; *nat. et gr.* | | 3 | | 3 |
| | - *Ep.* 167; *De patientia*; *c. Iul.*; *Enchiridion* | 9 | | | 9 |
| *Date uncertain* | *En. Ps.*; *Serm.* | 2 | 1 | | 3 |
| **Total testimonies** | | 72 | 10 | 13 | 95 |
| Total Passages[•] | | 36 | 6 | 4 | 46 |

[6] 2 vols, Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia 20.1-2 (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1967).
[7] These 72 testimonies comprise 36 passages from *Bellum Catilinae*. The distribution for the other works is as follows: 10 testimonies (6 passages) derive from *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 13 (4 passages) from *Historiae*. All the testimonies of the *Historiae* are situated in *De civitate Dei*, which makes it a vital source for the recovery of some fragments of this lost work.
[8] Augustine, for instance, manages to reproduce no less than a quarter of the introduction of *Bellum Catilinae* through 28 passages he quotes from it! H. Hagendahl 1967, II, p. 638; the remarkable length of the preface (1-13) of *Bellum Catilinae* in comparison with the narrative as a whole, (more than 17%!) breaches the rules of proportion (C.S. Kraus 1997, p. 13).
[9] H. Hagendahl 1967, II, 637.
[◊] Taken from H. Hagendahl 1967, II, 631.
[•] Several passages are cited more than once, hence the difference between the number of passages and the number of testimonies.

# Appendix F: Simplicianus' Story of Victorinus' Baptism

Why was moral reform at the conversion moment so inherently tied up with baptism in Augustinus' eyes, but not so for Alypius? There is a conversion story in book VIII of *Confessiones*, which has baptism at its heart. Only Augustinus heard it, during a private consultation with the old priest Simplicianus. The reason for inserting the story at the beginning of book VIII is somewhat puzzling. Augustine indicated that his sexual habit was the remaining problem, since it prevented him from enjoying God more stably.[10] He very much hoped Simplicanus would find a solution. He could not turn to Ambrose, because his problem needed considerable time to explain, and the busy bishop could never make himself free for such a lengthy period of time.[11]

Simplicanus' story seems concerned with a completely different matter, but it can help to explain the difference in attitude towards baptism between Augustinus and Alypius.

Marius Victorinus (AD *c.* 281/291- after 363), the famous rhetorician of Rome, was highly educated, well-studied in (Neo-)Platonism, and interested in Christianity.[12] Privately, he confided to Simplicianus that he was already a Christian. Simplicianus rejected this claim, since Victorinus resented receiving any of the Church sacraments, afraid as he was of the hostile reaction of his pagan friends.[13] After further study of the Bible, Victorinus came to the conclusion that, unless he received the sacraments instituted by the Catholic Church - thereby openly humbling himself to become Christ's servant - he would be denied before Christ. He drank in courage from reading the Bible, and one day he suddenly told Simplicianus he wished to go to the Church to become a Christian. Not long after his instructions into the first mysteries, he publicly made profession of his salvation at his baptism, this to the great joy and admiration of the congregation.

Simplicianus' aim in telling this story was to encourage Augustinus to imitate Victorinus and to seek baptism, because without this essential sacrament he would not be a true Christian.[14] He exhorted him, as Augustine describes it afterwards, '*to the humility of Christ hidden from the wise and revealed to babes*'.[15] This Biblical citation, too, alludes to

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[10] *Conf.* VII. xvii (23) & VIII. i. (1).

[11] *Conf.* VI. iii (4).

[12] See also part I, the chapter on (Neo-)Platonism, section 3.4.3.

[13] G. Bonner regards Victorinus as almost 'the archetype of the semi-Christian, torn between two irreconcilable factions and reluctant to sever his links with one by declaring for the other', (G. Bonner, 'The Extinction of Paganism and the Church Historian', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), 339- 357 (p. 350)).

[14] *Conf.* VIII. v (10): 'Sed ubi mihi homo tuus Simplicianus de Victorino ista narravit. Exarsi ad imitandum: ad hoc enim et ille narraverat' ('*As soon as your servant Simplicianus told me this story about Victorinus, I was ardent to follow his example. He had indeed told it to me with this object in view*'). G. Bonner's evaluation of the purpose of the story of Victorinus in 'Augustine's "Conversion": Historical Fact or Literary Device?' (*Augustinus* 38 (1993), 103-119 (p. 111)) seems very sound: exhortation to commit to the Catholic Church through baptism, and not so much the issue whether concessions ought to be made to social standing and dignity.

[15] *Conf.* VIII. ii (3); Matthew 11: 25.

the fundamental distinction Augustinus would draw between (Neo-)Platonic philosophy and Christianity.

Instead of trying to see Simplicianus' story as a response to Augustinus' problem with his sexual habit and his entanglement in worldly affairs,[16] we should question whether Simplicianus was aware of these particular concerns when he began his story. When Augustinus in telling his life story, mentioned he had read some (Neo-)Platonic books, which were translated into Latin by Victorinus, it seems that Simplicianus interrupted him at this point.[17] By now, he had already sufficient reason to talk about Victorinus' conversion, without having to be aware of Augustinus' particular problems.

Undoubtedly, the old priest saw many parallels between his visitor and the celebrated Victorinus (he had a statue in Rome in the forum of Trajan). They were both rhetoricians of African origin, interested in (Neo-)Platonism and Christianity. A story of how the famous Victorinus became a Christian, was bound to impress his visitor. Augustinus, too, was lingering at the door of the Church, but for some reason still hesitant to enter. It might well be that Simplicianus simply assumed Augustinus had the same problems as Victorinus: thinking that the Church sacraments could add nothing to the truth found in (Neo-)Platonic philosophy and the Bible, so that there was no need to upset his friends by seeking baptism. Before, he had told Simplicianus about his '*wanderings in error*', which surely must refer to his Manichean period.[18] Simplicianus, being aware how much the Manichees looked down upon the Catholic faith, undoubtedly must have suspected that Augustinus was going to face some serious criticism and even scorn from his (ex-?)Manichean friends, if he were to convert to Christianity. Once an ardent Manichean proselyte himself, Augustinus had ridiculed the Catholic faith for its naïve credulity.[19] He did indeed receive some considerable criticism from his circle for his spectacular U-turn in life, putting many friendships on the line by his radical conversion. In this context there is a remarkable verbal echo linking the hostility of Victorinus' former friends with the criticism of Alypius, Augustinus' dearest friend, at Cassiciacum.[20]

Alypius was scornful of inserting the name of Christ in the Cassiciacum dialogues. He did this, Augustinus writes in *Confessiones*,

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[16] This leads to forced interpretations. J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 7) tried to find common ground between Augustinus' sexual lust and Victorinus' fear of his pagan friends, which he therefore both regards as "native disinclinations" necessary to overcome in order to receive baptism. For Simplicianus to make such a link seems far fetched, and unnecessary, if we recognize that Augustinus was going to face similar hostile reactions of his (ex-)Manichaean friends, if he committed himself to the Catholic faith.

[17] *Conf.* VIII. ii (3).

[18] *Conf.* VIII. ii (3): 'narravi ei circuitus erroris mei'.

[19] In this he resembled to a certain degree St. Paul, who from a vehement prosecutor of Christians suddenly became one of them.

[20] J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 22) notices the verbal echo and recognizes the parallel context of the two passages, but draws no conclusions from it.

> Magis enim eas volebat redolere gymnasiorum cedros, quas iam contrivit dominus, quam salubres herbas ecclesiasticas adversas serpentibus.[21]
>
> *Because he wanted them to smell of the 'cedars' of the schools 'which the Lord had now felled' (Psalm 28: 5) rather than of the healthgiving herbs of the Church which are a remedy against serpents.*

Victorinus had been afraid to offend his friends, because

> Quorum ex culmine Babylonicae dignitatis quasi ex cedris Libani, quas nondum contriverat dominus, graviter ruituras in se inimicitias arbitrabatur.[22]
>
> *He thought that from the height of Babylonian dignity, as if from the cedars of Lebanon which the Lord had not yet broken (Psalm 28: 5), the full weight of their hostility would land on him.*

*Dedignabatur* and *Babylonica* (which stands for *Romana*) *dignitas* both allude to the *dignitas* characteristic of the traditional Roman nobility, which is closely connected with their pride. Alypius was apparently still very much taken by the principles of Roman traditional ideology. In other words, his Christian-tinged philosophical life initially conformed to traditional standards. If even Alypius was displeased about Augustinus' profound commitment to the Catholic cause, one can imagine how much more disconcerted his other (ex-?)Manichean friends must have been.

The story of Victorinus was thus only to a limited degree relevant to Augustinus' situation, since it did not address the specific issue of chastity or worldly ambition in the context of entering the Church. Victorinus discovered that the praise and admiration of his new Christian friends - the holy congregation - abundantly compensated the loss of respect he enjoyed among his friends of the traditional elite. In this way, Simplicianus exploited a soft spot of ambitious Romans, namely their eager for praise, to woo Augustinus into the Church.

Just how mistaken Simplicianus apparently was in assessing Augustinus' condition is illustrated by a further anecdote he told about Victorinus. Although it was clearly meant as a kind of afterthought, it was actually more relevant to Augustinus' actual problem. In order to exemplify how courageous Victorinus had become in his Christian faith, he mentioned that, when the edict of emperor Julian, the Apostate, forbade Christians to teach literature and rhetoric, Victorinus (who was already very old) heroically resigned from his teaching post.[23] Augustinus' reaction at hearing this brave exploit was surprising: 'non mihi fortior quam felicior visus est, quia invenit occasionem vacandi tibi' ('*I thought Victorinus not so much courageous as fortunate to find occasion for dedicating all his time to You*').[24] He could only dream of having such a perfect pretext

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[21] *Conf.* IX. iv (7).
[22] *Conf.* VIII. ii (4).
[23] *Conf.* VIII. v (10).
[24] *Conf.* VIII. v (10).

for leaving his current teaching post, which he already had come to hold in disgust.[25] Soon, a similarly helpful excuse would present itself to him.[26]

One could object that, if the story was not particularly relevant to Augustinus' specific problem, why then was it included in *Confessiones*? Augustinus provides us with an answer:

> Deque illo mihi narravit quod non silebo. Habet enim magnam laudem gratiae tuae confitendam tibi.[27]
>
> *He [i.e. Simplicianus] told me a story about him [i.e. Victorinus] which I will not pass over in silence. For the story gives occasion for me to confess to You in great praise for Your grace.*

The fact that he gave an explicit reason for inserting the story may be an indication that, actually, it was not particularly relevant to the problem of his sexual habit, or of his entanglement with worldly goods.[28] As it turned out, the story did not succeed in its aim: although Augustinus was ardent to follow Victorinus' example, he could not bring himself to break the chains which bound him down to the earth, mainly because they were of a different order from those of Victorinus.

J.J.O'Donnell rejects P. Courcelle's view that the story of Victorinus was mainly concerned with the intellectual aspect of Christianity in relation to (Neo-)Platonism.[29] However, the story does seem to centre around the fundamental differences between a (Neo-)Platonic philosopher who privately was sympathetic towards the truth of Christianity,[30] and someone who completely surrendered to Christ, and accepted the sacraments of the Catholic Church, believing it was indispensable for personal salvation. This point is very important, since it resembles the initial difference in attitude between Augustinus and Alypius towards Christ and the Catholic Church. In all probability, Alypius was not familiar with the story of Victorinus.[31] He behaved after his conversion still very much like Victorinus before his conversion: privately prepared to call himself a Christian, but resisting its public and sacramental consequences. Alypius wished to remain, above all, an ascetic (traditional) philosopher, thinking this would be sufficient to obtain wisdom and to reach the happy life.

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[25] *Conf.* VIII. i (2).
[26] I.e. his ill-health.
[27] *Conf.* VIII. ii (3).
[28] Another reason for including the story is that it provided the opportunity for Augustinus to justify the fact that Christians feel more joy when someone famous has joined their ranks. *Conf.* VIII. iv (9) – v (10).
[29] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 7.
[30] This was also Augustinus' position at the time he visited Simplicianus.
[31] Augustinus mentions that his quest was vigorously pursued in private, and that he could not tell everything what went on within himself, not even to his closest friends (*Conf.* VII. vii (11)).

## APPENDIX G: ALYPIUS' LIMITED CONVERSION: AGAINST BAPTISM?

When in late August AD 386 Augustinus went through a conversion experience in the garden of his residence, Alypius was close by, deeply concerned about his friend's well being. Nebridius was absent at the time for an unnamed reason.[32] Afterwards, Augustinus immediately ran to Alypius to tell him what had happened to him, and how applying *sortes Paulinae*[33] had transformed his life. Alypius was eager to follow his lead. He took the continuation of the Pauline passage in question – 'infirmum autem in fide recipite' ('*Receive the person who is weak in faith*')[34] - to be his own Biblical oracle. Augustine testifies:

> Placitoque ac propositio bono et congruentissimo suis moribus, quibus a me in melius iam olim valde longeque distabat, sine ulla turbulentia cunctatione coniunctus est.[35]
>
> *Without any agony of hesitation, he joined me in making a good resolution and affirmation of intention, entirely congruent with his moral principles in which he had long been greatly superior to me.*

What exactly Augustinus disclosed to Alypius about his conversion experience, and what he meant with the rather vague description '*a good resolution and affirmation of intention, entirely congruent with his moral principles*', remains unclear. For sure, Alypius totally committed himself together with Augustinus to an ascetic leisured life devoted to the study of wisdom. He had repeatedly shown himself morally the superior of his friend, especially in the field of sexual pleasure. Although he had begun to show an unhealthy interest in Augustinus' infatuation with sexual pleasure, he was not (yet?) a captive of lust: for all we know, he was still leading an exemplary chaste life at the time.[36] Radical renunciation of a worldly life had also less troublesome consequences for him. Alypius was unemployed at the time, so he did not have to worry about resignation[37]; he had no concubine to dismiss, or a wife or fiancée to take into consideration. These factors can help to explain the tranquil process of his conversion, as opposed to Augustinus' violent inner birth pangs to his new life.

There is less clarity about the Catholic dimension of Alypius' conversion. Nothing in the description of the joint resolution seems to refer unambiguously to submission to the

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[32] *Conf.* VIII. vi (14).

[33] Sortilege is an oracle technique, whereby a book is randomly opened, in this case the Pauline epistles. The first sentence one then reads is considered to be a divine oracle relating to the reader's current situation.

[34] *Conf.* VIII. xii (30). For the ambiguity of this oracle, see n. 17.

[35] *Conf.* VIII. xii (30): placitoque ac proposito bono et congruentissimo suis moribus, quibus a me in melius iam olim valde longeque distabat, sine ulla turbulenta cunctatione coniunctus est.

[36] Too easily commentators give the impression that Alypius became as much ensnared by sexual lust as Augustinus (for instance, C. Starnes 1990, pp. 158-159: 'By his thoughtless flirting with a danger he did not have to face, he himself was caught by the same lust which held Augustine. Alypius was to remain in these sweet snares until his conversion'). However, Augustinus says that from Alypius' (un-healthy) interest, *perhaps* he would have come under the spell of sexual pleasure: 'stupendo ibat in experiendi cupidinem, venturus in ipsam experientiam atque inde *fortasse* lapsurus in eam quam stupebat servitutem' (*Conf.* VI. xii (22)). This statement can actually be regarded as an admission that Alypius did not surrender to his curiosity concerning sexual pleasure, and that Augustinus too quickly assumed Alypius was going to fall into the same habit as him.

[37] *Conf.* VIII. vi (13).

Catholic faith, let alone to baptism. Both Alypius and Augustinus immediately told Monnica what happened.[38] She realized that her son was finally converted to Christianity, and she could reasonably expect he soon would become a *fidelis* (i.e. baptized believer) in the Catholic Church. J.J. O'Donnell comments: 'What did they tell Monnica? Perhaps, even probably, that they had decided to take baptism eight or nine months hence, but more definitely that Augustinus had chosen to change his ways'.[39] Indeed, Augustinus seems to have been much clearer about his resolution to abandon his worldly life, which caught Monnica by surprise. Her joy, on the other hand, only makes sense when the prospect of baptism was held out to her.

J.J. O'Donnell's proposal that also baptism was probably part of the resolution conflicts with his own statement that 'there is an arresting suggestion of a limited conversion on Alypius' part as late as November' (i.e. more than two months after the conversion experience).[40] During their leisured stay at Cassiciacum (mid September/October AD 386 – beginning of March AD 387), Alypius had an argument with Augustinus during the editorial process of the dialogues. Augustinus wanted to include in them the name of Christ, but Alypius scorned such an idea, thinking it beneath the dignity of philosophical writings.[41] The presence of the name of Christ was no small matter to Augustinus. Christ not only stood at the heart of his conversion, throughout his life, he could never be fully persuaded by a book of wisdom, if it lacked the name of Christ.

There is an even clearer indication to question the assumption that baptism was part of the joint resolution made in the Milanese garden late August AD 386, and it further throws doubt upon Alypius' commitment to the Catholic faith. He only seems to have decided on receiving this crucial sacrament towards the end of February AD 387,[42] whereas Augustinus already in the middle of October AD 386 had sent a letter to bishop Ambrose, notifying his wish to be baptised.[43]

Augustine probably had a good reason why he wished to remain vague about the Christian element in their agreement, and instead focused on the ascetic aspect: Alypius' conversion was not as Christ-centred as his, and he did not (yet) share his desire to become a baptized believer. Perhaps a lingering Manichean aversion for sacramental rites - baptism was to this sect 'a superfluous and useless external act'[44] - made Alypius reluctant to commit himself so totally to the Catholic faith. We know much about Augustinus' gradual extrication from Manichean belief, but we are less well informed

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[38] *Conf.* VIII. xii (30).
[39] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 70.
[40] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 90.
[41] *Conf.* IX. iv (7).
[42] *Conf.* IX. vi (14).
[43] *Conf.* IX. v (13).
[44] Quotation from H. Chadwick 1991, p. 57 n. 9. See also *Conf.* IX. iv (8): '*They [i.e. the Manichees] were ignorant of your remedies, the sacraments. They were madly hostile to the antidote which could have cured them.*'

about this process concerning his close friends, some of whom Augustinus personally had converted to Manicheism. Alypius, too, had been an ardent Manichee, and Augustinus admits in *Confessiones* that due to his friend's misconception of Christ(!),[45] his move towards the Catholic faith had been slower.[46] J.J. O'Donnell rightly states:

> His [*sc.* of Alypius]', is the attitude that many attribute to Augustine at Cassiciacum: he sees in Christianity a useful type of philosophy, but his principal allegiance is to philosophy, so he has a certain disdain ('dedignabatur') for popular forms.[47]

Alypius was above all converted to an ascetic life of philosophy which was only tinged with Christianity. With no more than a peripheral role given to Christ in his life, he did not feel the obligation to submit himself to the yoke of the Catholic faith. In the course of their stay at Cassiciacum, Augustinus must have finally convinced Alypius of the centrality of Christ in their newly adopted life, and of the necessity of baptism, so that towards the end (February AD 387), Alypius eventually decided to follow his friend also in this aspect of his conversion.[48]

When Augustine described himself at Cassiciacum as 'catechumenus in villa cum catechumeno Alypio feriatus' (*'a catechumen resting at a county villa with another catechumen, Alypius'*),[49] he masks an important difference between the two. Alypius was still clinging to the principles of traditional ideology, regarding their leisured life very much in the style of a traditional philosophical haven, in the way Cicero looked upon his Tusculan retreat. Augustinus, on the other hand, essentially saw Cassiciacum as a preparation for baptism: his Christ-centred life in philosophy firmly put him within a totally different belief system.

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[45] This misconception might be partly responsible for Alypius resisting the inclusion of Christ's name in the philosophical dialogues. Also Nebridius, the other close friend of Augustinus, was still influenced by the Manichean concept of Christ (see further).

[46] *Conf.* VII. xix (25).

[47] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, III, p. 90.

[48] The issue of determining how Alypius understood his own (and therefore also Augustinus') conversion, is regrettably not further clarified by the oracular Pauline passage, which Alypius applied to himself (quod ille ad se rettulit (*Conf.* VIII. xii (30)). '*Receive the person who is weak in faith*' (Romans 14: 1) is frustratingly ambiguous. If Alypius identified himself with the person who was weak in faith, then he acknowledged that he himself was not fully convinced of the Catholic faith. 'Sed tali admonitione firmatus' gives indeed the impression that Alypius was the weak one. However, if he identified himself as the one who has to receive, then Augustinus became the one *infirmus in fide*. The conversion might then well have been understood by Alypius to be a moral one, with Augustinus needing the support of the morally superior Alypius to lead a chaste life. Alypius' insistence in the past that continence was necessary to lead a life in philosophy, his admiration for the austere life of the Manichaean elect, Augustinus' constant praise of his moral character, indicate that Alypius might well have understood the conversion to be essentially about embracing an ascetic life. Also J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 70) notices possible confusion in this oracle, but does not differentiate between moral reform and submission to the Catholic faith: 'There is both flattery and caution in giving this text to Alypius; *infirmos* at VII. xix (5) and *infirmus* at VII. xx (26) make it clear that Alypius' text is not a put-down for him, but that Augustinus was *infirmus* too; at the same time, infirmity in faith is an appropriate temptation for one who has always been beset more by *curiositas* than anything else'.

[49] *Conf.* IX. iv (8).

## APPENDIX H: PERSUADING TWO FRIENDS

During his remaining teaching weeks before the Vintage Vacation, Augustine tried in private to persuade his closest friends to join him in his (Christian inspired) retreat devoted to the study of (Christian) wisdom. His proposal to set up a contemplative community must have seemed to them a reorganized version of the previous failed project.[50] They would have discerned two important modifications of the original plan: it now required commitment to the Catholic faith as well as to an ascetic life. Augustine records in *Confessiones* the reaction to his plans of two friends (Verecundus and Nebridius), but we can assume that he solicited others as well.[51]

### 1. Verecundus

Verecundus reacted very violently when Augustine and Alypius told him about their new plans, because he feared that it would mean the end of their friendship.[52] He could not follow their example, tied as he was to his worldly obligations, and, above all, to his wife. He did not want to commit himself to the Catholic faith, because, as a married man, he would only enjoy second-class status among Christians.[53] Despite Augustine's exhortations that he should embrace the Catholic faith appropriate to his rank, he remained a pagan, until his fatal illness a year later. Only on his deathbed was he made a *christianus* (i.e. a catechumen) and a *fidelis* (i.e. a baptized believer).[54] Although he refused to join Augustine and Alypius, he offered them his country villa in Cassiciacum (*rus Cassiciacum*) to accommodate the projected small community. Since he was not (yet) a *christianus*, this should be regarded as an act of (traditional!) *humanitas*.[55] In *Confessiones* Augustine understandably wished to focus on the Christian dimension of his project. At the time, though, the philosophical-ascetic aspect must have been equally important. It may well be that Verecundus simply felt he could not join their new philosophical project, for the same reason why the previous one had failed: his

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[50] J.J. O'Donnell 1992, II, p. 380.

[51] The reason why he mentioned only these two friends might well be because they died as baptized Christians.

[52] *Conf.* IX. iii (5).

[53] *Conf.* IX. iii (5)-(6). Here, as was the case with Victorinus, the issue of status and prestige played an important role.

[54] Commentators are inclined to present Verecundus as someone who refrains from baptism because of his married status. (For instance Paula Fredriksen, 'Augustine and his Annalists: The Possibility of a Psychohistory', *Soundings* 61 (1978), 206-227 (p. 222): 'Verecundus, Augustine's friend in Milan, refuses baptism, not because he does not believe, but because he is married'. Actually he even resisted being a mere catechumen in the Catholic Church because of his marriage, which is perhaps even more striking. C. Starnes (1990, p. 268 n. 26) leaves open the possibility that his wife, though a *fidelis*, objected to the idea that Verecundus would follow Augustine, something which brings back to mind the *mulierculae*, who prevented the earlier project from materializing. C. Starnes gives the impression that Verecundus was already a catechumen in the church, when he writes in the same passage: 'Verecundus became sick, was baptized, and died during Augustine's second stay in Rome'. The Latin, however, is clear: 'et [...] christianus et fidelis factus' (*Conf.* IX. iii (5)).

[55] C. Starnes 1990, p. 250.

*muliercula* still opposed such a way of life.[56] Now that even continence was recommended, it became even less likely that Verecundus was able to persuade his wife.

## 2. Nebridius

Nebridius came closest in following Augustine's example. Contrary to Verecundus, he shared in their joy,[57] while he was already leading a chaste life.[58] His eventual decision not to follow the example of his two best friends was a great disappointment to them. His absence from Cassiciacum demonstrates the exceptional character of the retreat. In Milan, Nebridius, Augustine and Alypius already formed a nucleus of friends living together and devoting their spare time to philosophical inquiry.[59] In the past, Nebridius had left behind his rich estate near Carthage, and had come to Italy for no other reason than to be with Augustinus in search for wisdom.[60]

Probably, the Christian dimension of the retreat deterred Nebridius. Although he was at the time assisting Verecundus in his grammar teaching, it is hard to believe that he could not leave behind this fairly humble position, or that Verecundus would have pressured him to stay on. Augustine presents in a very skilfully wrought passage Nebridius' religious state at the time, presenting him favourably inclined towards Christianity, despite his Manichean past:

> Quamvis enim et ipse nondum christianus in illam foveam perniciosissimi erroris inciderat ut veritatis filii tui carnem phantasma crederet, tamen inde emergens sic ibi erat, nondum imbutus ullis ecclesiae tuae sacramentis, sed inquisitor ardentissimus veritatis.[61]
>
> *For although he himself [i.e. Nebridius] was also not yet a Christian, he had fallen into that ditch of pernicious error [i.e. Manichaeism], so that he had come to believe that the flesh of your Son, the truth, was illusory, nevertheless he was in the process of emerging from this position, so that he was in the following state, that, not yet initiated into any of the sacraments of your Church, he was however an ardent seeker after truth.*

Twice Augustine acknowledges that Nebridius was not committed at all to the Catholic faith ('nondum christianus'; 'nondum imbutus *ullis* sacramentis'). Each time he indicates that, nevertheless, he was firmly on his way to embrace Christianity ('tamen emergens'; 'sed inquisitor veritatis'). Nebridius had nonetheless a wrong idea of Christ at the time, since the present participle *emergens* (perhaps therefore better translated into 'in the process of emerging' than 'he had emerged' as H. Chadwick did[62]) admits that Nebridius

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[56] No doubt Verecundus formed part of the little group of friends who tried to set up this Epicurean styled community.
[57] *Conf.* IX. iii (6).
[58] *Conf.* IV. iii (6).
[59] For instance: *Conf.* VI. vii (11) and VI. xv (25).
[60] *Conf.* VI. x (17).
[61] *Conf.* IX. iii (6).
[62] H. Chadwick 1991, p. 158.

was still influenced by Manichean thought.[63] The statement "sed inquisitor veritatis" contains a very clever ploy, which makes Nebridius seem closer towards accepting Christianity, than probably was the case at the time. By having added the apposition *veritatis* to *filii Dei* earlier in the sentence,[64] Augustine is insinuating a link between the truth Nebridius was investigating ('sed inquisitor *veritatis*') and Christ (= *filius Dei* = *veritas*). This link, however, was probably not yet in Nebridius' mind.[65] It would therefore be better to understand 'inquisitor ardentissimus veritatis' in a purely philosophical sense, without any Christian connotations. Nebridius always had shown a certain independence of mind, criticising and questioning astrology and even Manicheism, before Augustine had done.[66]

What might eventually have deterred him from joining Augustinus' new project was the prerequisite to accept the authority of the Catholic Church. The fact that soon after Augustine's baptism (i.e. after the end of April AD 387), Nebridius, too, would become a *christianus*[67] and a *fidelis*, does not bear out that he was on the brink of conversion to the Catholic faith in September AD 386. It can also be regarded as a further attempt of Augustine to gloss over the objections Nebridius had raised at this particular moment in time about the project, and instead preferred to focus on the fact that he later did become a baptized believer. Even as a baptized Christian, Nebridius retained his purely philosophical interest in the Truth, much to the frustration of Augustine, who had become more occupied with the Catholic Church and the intellectual challenge its doctrine faced against heretical views.[68]

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[63] C. Starnes (1990, p. 268 n. 33) thinks that Nebridius wished to remain attached to his worldly interests in Milan, or else that he 'already knew the truth of Christianity so there was no need for further inquiry'. Seeing that Nebridius was not an ambitious man, and still struggling with the Catholic concept of Christ, these assumptions seem unlikely.

[64] J.J. O'Donnell (1992, III, p. 86) even recommends to translate it into 'of the Truth, Your Son' because *veritatis* is positioned first.

[65] Earlier on in *Confessiones*, Nebridius is described as someone who was part of the group living together 'in studio veritatis atque sapientiae' and he himself was 'beatae vitae inquisitor ardens'. J.J. O'Donnell (1992, II, pp. 369-370) comments: 'The friends search, both knowing and not knowing what it is they seek, not seeing the (to Augustine of 397, ineluctable) epithets of Christ in these words'. What had become obvious to Augustine (Christ = *veritas, sapientia, beata vita*), Nebridius most likely did not approve of in September AD 386.

[66] *Conf.* IV. iii (6) on astrology; *Conf.* VII. ii (3) on Manicheism.

[67] Nebridius 'nondum imbutus ullis ecclesiae tuae sacramentis' was not even a catechumen of the Church in September AD 386. It makes us more aware that even his most intimate friends did not seem to have shared Augustine's interest in the Catholic faith.

[68] See the correspondence between the two friends, especially *Epistula* XI. 2, wherein Augustine refuses to answer questions on worldly topics, and only wishes to discuss the mystery of the Incarnation.

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# *LATIN TEXTS - TRANSLATIONS*

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